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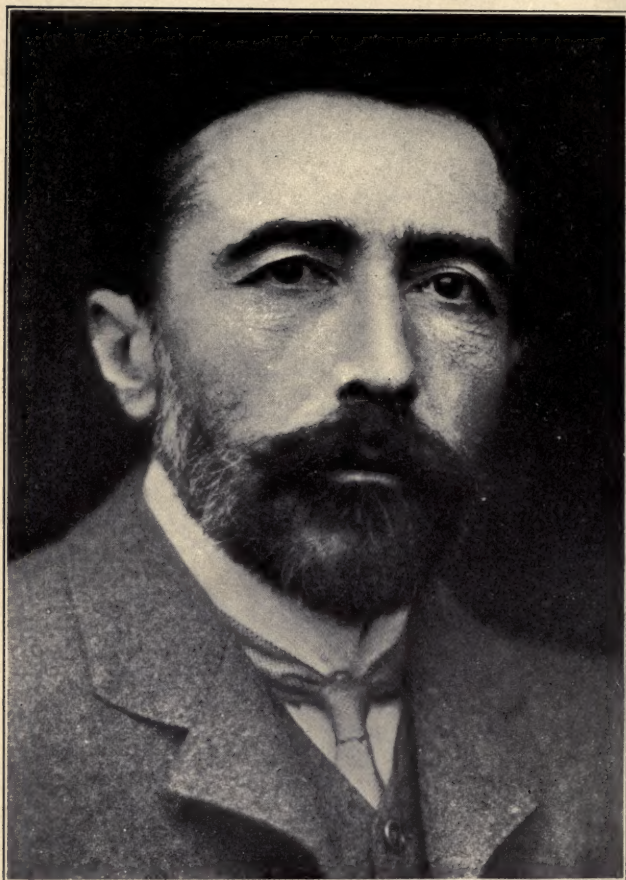
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JOSEPH CONRAD

SOME ENGLISH STORY TELLERS

A BOOK OF THE YOUNGER NOVELISTS

BY
FREDERIC TABER COOPER

WITH PORTRAITS



NEW YORK
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

1912



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Published November, 1912

36930
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PREFACE

As in the case of *Some American Story Tellers*, the title of the present volume has been deliberately chosen, in order to place the various types of modern writers of fiction more or less on a level, as primarily public entertainers, whose first duty is to hold public attention with the spell of the spoken word. There is no intention to minimize, by the use of this title, the high function that fiction is tending more and more to play as a criticism of contemporary manners and ethics; but it does permit of a more indulgent attitude towards such writers as take their responsibilities more lightly, and to recognize that, within its class and in view of its author's purpose, Anthony Hope's *Dolly Dialogues* is as finished a piece of story-telling as Arnold Bennett's *Old Wives' Tale*.

Furthermore, this volume does not pretend to have made a definitive choice of the fifteen novelists of the day who are best deserving of critical recognition. It is necessarily to some extent a matter of personal preference; and, since the limits of space prevent the inclusion of all the present-day writers about whom the author has views that he would gladly express, the consequence is that

several of the younger novelists who well deserve a place in these pages have been crowded out,—notably, Mr. Leonard Merrick, Mr. J. C. Snaith and Mr. W. B. Maxwell,—in order to make room for older writers, such as Rudyard Kipling and Anthony Hope, whose recognized importance as story tellers makes their inclusion a matter to be taken for granted. For the most part, however, the intention has been to give preference to those novelists about whom comparatively little has yet been written, in the way of definitely placing them,—writers who are of interest quite as much for their promise as for their fulfilment, and whose best work, there is reason to believe, still lies in the future. And that is the reason why many story tellers of the recognized worth of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle,—to mention only one of many names,—have been with some reluctance omitted.

Most of the essays in this volume have appeared, either in whole or in part, in the *New York Bookman*; portions of the articles on Alfred Ollivant, "Frank Danby" and W. J. Locke were published in the *Forum*; those on John Galsworthy and John Trevena have been expanded from short papers contributed to the *Book News Monthly*; and certain paragraphs of that on Rudyard Kipling are modified extracts from reviews of *The Five Nations* and *Traffics and Discoveries*,

PREFACE

vii

published respectively in the issues of November, 1903 and 1904, of the *World's Work*. And to the editors of these several periodicals, the author wishes herewith to express his appreciation for their courtesy in permitting him to reproduce the aforesaid articles.

FREDERIC TABER COOPER.

NEW YORK CITY,
October 29, 1912.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
-I. JOSEPH CONRAD	1
II. WILLIAM FRENDE MORGAN	31
III. MAURICE HEWLETT	54
IV. EDEN PHILLPOTTS	94
V. RUDYARD KIPLING	122
VI. WILLIAM JOHN LOCKE	148
-VII. JOHN GALSWORTHY	177
-VIII. ARNOLD BENNETT	206
IX. ANTHONY HOPE	232
X. MAY SINCLAIR	252
XI. ALFRED OLLIVANT	280
XII. MRS. HENRY DUDENEY	297
XIII. JOHN TREVENA	324
XIV. ROBERT HICHENS	342
XV. "FRANK DANBY"	376
BIBLIOGRAPHY	417
INDEX	457

PORTRAITS

JOSEPH CONRAD	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	PAGE
WILLIAM FRENDE DE MORGAN	31
MAURICE HEWLETT	54
EDEN PHILLPOTTS	94
RUDYARD KIPLING	122
WILLIAM JOHN LOCKE	148
JOHN GALSWORTHY	177
ARNOLD BENNETT	206
ANTHONY HOPE	232
MAY SINCLAIR	252
ALFRED OLLIVANT	280
MRS. HENRY DUDENEY	297
JOHN TREVENA	324
ROBERT HICHENS	342
"FRANK DANBY"	376

JOSEPH CONRAD

WITH the possible exception of Mr. Henry James, there is no living writer of fiction in English whom it behooves the critic to approach with more modesty and self-mistrust than Joseph Conrad. There is no other writer of similar magnitude whose treatment in the past has been so inadequate, so prejudiced, so blindly narrow and one-sided. From the time when one of his earliest book notices bore the caption, "A Puzzle for Reviewers," his detractors have never become tired of insisting that he knows neither how to write correct English nor how to construct a story; and his admirers have expended their energies in explaining and apologizing for him—whereas, in reality, he needs neither apology nor explanation, but merely a far heartier recognition than he has yet received. The attitude of criticism toward him has not seriously troubled Mr. Conrad. As he himself writes, in *A Personal Record*—a unique human document, from which it will be profitable to draw freely in this article—"fifteen years of unbroken silence before praise or blame testify sufficiently to my respect for criticism, that fine

flower of personal expression in the garden of letters." But, though the author himself can afford to be tolerant of miscomprehension and undervaluation, the serious student of modern tendencies in fiction cannot afford to overlook the fact that Conrad is one of the very few who have added something absolutely new to the art and the technique of his vocation.

It is worth while before passing on to examine more specifically the qualities of Conrad's fiction, to take up for a moment a couple of special articles of comparatively recent date, that of Mr. John A. Macy in the *Atlantic Monthly* and of John Galsworthy in the *Contemporary Review*. These articles are singled out from a number of others because, while fairly representative in tone, they were put forth with the semblance of special authority and finality. Mr. Macy, while questioning the greatness of modern writers in general, somewhat dubiously suggests Mr. Conrad as the one possible claimant. He extols Mr. Conrad's lofty ideals, and then, on the ground that a writer of such high standards must be judged with exceptional rigidity, proceeds to devote a large part of his article to picking flaws in the construction of his author's several stories, as measured by the pocket rule of cut-and-dried technique. The sum and substance of what he has to say is to blame Conrad for not having

done as other and lesser writers were contented to do before him—instead of seeking to discover how and why he has succeeded in being splendidly and triumphantly himself.

Mr. Galsworthy's article deserves a brief word for quite a different reason. Here we have a cordial appreciation by a fellow-craftsman who already occupies as dignified a position in his own generation as Mr. Conrad does in his. That Mr. Galsworthy's critical acumen is distinctly inferior to his creative power becomes apparent long before we reach the following paragraph, so extravagant that it largely discounts its own value:

The writing of these (Conrad's) ten books is probably the only writing of the last twelve years that will enrich the English language to any extent.

The technical side of Joseph Conrad's work does not especially interest Mr. Galsworthy. He is concerned mainly with an attempt to sum up the essential spirit of Conrad in some epigrammatic, easily portable form, to find some catchphrase that sounds like an explanation, and that really is as futile as an attempt to reduce a myriad-sided solid to a plane surface. The Universe, in the words of Mr. Galsworthy, "is always saying: The little part called man is always smaller than the whole!"—and the writer

who recognizes the truth of this possesses, so he tells us, the cosmic spirit. Consequently, Mr. Conrad's claim to recognition rests upon the fact that he is unique among novelists in possessing this spirit:

In the novels of Balzac and Charles Dickens there is the feeling of environment, of the growth of men from men. In the novels of Turgenev the characters are bathed in light; nature in her many moods is all around, but man is first. In the novels of Joseph Conrad nature is first, man is second.

Now, if this were literally true, if Mr. Conrad really believed that a rainbow or a water-spout was of more importance to mankind than man himself: then, instead of proving his claim to greatness by pointing out this fact, Mr. Galsworthy would simply have knocked the idol from his pedestal and proved him to be stuffed with straw. It is all very well to have enough of the cosmic spirit to recognize that in the ultimate scheme of things the part is always smaller than the whole, and that, as a rudimentary principle of physics, a mountain contains more molecules than a man. But Mr. Conrad is not writing for an audience of mountains, but for his fellow-men—and no really good work can be done by any living creature, man, beast or bird, whose chief concern is not with his own species. A member of a

beehive would make a pretty poor bee if he were not convinced of the supreme importance of bees.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Conrad's books leave no such impression on the mind of the average reader as they seem to have left upon Mr. Galsworthy. It is almost incredible that any one could read them without feeling, above all else, their vital and tremendous human interest. It is quite true that he deals by preference with titanic forces: the unbridled rage of the ocean, the invincible sweep of a wind-driven storm, the unmeasured and impenetrable depths of a tropic forest. But everywhere and always his unit of measurement is man; man measuring his puny strength against the universe, and foredoomed to defeat; yet in his defeat remaining always the focal point of interest.

In order to understand how Mr. Conrad has formed his style and built up his literary creed, it is necessary to keep in mind just a few biographical details. Joseph Conrad Korzeniowski—to give him his full original name—was born in the Ukraine in about the year 1857. He comes of an old and illustrious family, distinguished for many services in peace and in war. His father was a poet and critic, and a translator of many English books. When he was still a little lad, he shared the exile of his parents, following upon the political disturbances of the early sixties—and

it was as a result of this exile that his mother lost her life, through the callous refusal of the Russian authorities to allow her time to recover from a dangerous illness. The last thing on earth that his family dreamed of for Conrad was a sea career, and his choice, when announced, aroused much astonishment and some characteristically mild opposition. He has recorded the happenings of a certain day spent with his tutor in the Alps, as being one of the great turning points in his life: "Of his devotion to his unworthy pupil there can be no doubt. He had proved it already by two years of unremitting and arduous care. I could not hate him. But he had been crushing me slowly, and when he started to argue on the top of the Furca Pass he was, perhaps, nearer success than either he or I imagined." But fate had arranged it otherwise; and a seemingly trivial incident turned the scales. They met and passed a middle-aged and jovial Englishman who, in passing, cast upon the boy of fifteen "a glance of kindly curiosity and a friendly gleam of big, sound, shiny teeth"; and Conrad says further, with his naïve, illuminating, inimitable power of self-revelation:

His glance, his smile, the unextinguishable and comic ardor of his striving forward appearance, helped me to pull myself together. . . . The enthusiastic old Englishman had passed—and the

argument went on. What reward could I expect from such a life at the end of my years, either in ambition, honor or conscience? An unanswerable question. But I felt no longer crushed. Then our eyes met and a genuine emotion was visible in his as well as in mine. The end came all at once. He picked up his knapsack suddenly and got onto his feet.

"You are an incorrigible, hopeless Don Quixote. That's what you are."

And after that, adds Conrad, there was no further question of his "mysterious vocation, nowhere nor with any one." There are few things in all his autobiography more typical of the man than the ability shown here, to lay his finger unerringly upon this seemingly trivial little detail, without which we should never have had *Almayer's Folly*, nor all the sequence of magic volumes which followed it. For twenty years, Conrad sailed the waters of the globe, working his way upward in the English merchant-marine service, through all the grades, until he won his Master's certificate, and took chief command. There is every reason to believe that, as a seaman, he was as painstaking and admirable in those days as he now is in the capacity of author. But he was unique among seamen for his love of reading—for his choice of books and his understanding grasp of them. No one can study Conrad profitably without keeping these all-important formative years in mind;

years spent in the unconscious amassing of infinite and priceless material, in the slow absorption of strange and alien personages, exotic and picturesque cities and harbors, fierce and undisciplined regions on the edge of the world; all the stage-settings and raw materials for human drama in the bulk. And all the while that he was unconsciously assimilating his material, Conrad was, with equal unconsciousness, learning how best to use it, by his tireless and voracious reading,—reading of books which some inborn instinct led him to choose with wonderful wisdom. The ✓ French writers were his favorites, and he learned his respect of the *mot juste* from Flaubert, and something of construction from Maupassant. In English, his tastes were similarly healthy. Dickens naturally appealed to him in a mild degree, for he shares with Dickens the love of drawing straight from life odd, grotesque, often-times misshapen oddities of humanity, and slightly caricaturing them in doing so. But Trollope is ✓ an author whose name crops up more frequently in Conrad's autobiographical pages,—and another whose influence is even more potent is Henry ✓ James,—Henry James, who, with all his mannerisms, has done more, than any other living master of fiction, to teach those who read him understandingly, the sheer craft of story writing.

These facts: twenty years face to face with

hardship and heroism; twenty years of leisure and isolation in which to grow up slowly to a knowledge of precisely how he could make the best use of his material; twenty years to drill himself in a language to which he was a total stranger up to his twentieth year, are a sufficient answer to those critics who were at one time too ready to dismiss Conrad's work lightly, as that of a man who had not learned his craft. The simple truth is that he had learned it with a thoroughness such as is hard to duplicate; that he knows his own reason for every episode, every paragraph, every separate word; that if he makes a mistake, if there are better ways for doing any one particular thing, his fault is committed with his eyes open, and in an honest belief that, for him at least, it is the one and only way.

Accordingly, it is well to take up the two reproaches most frequently made against him, and to consider to what extent they are justified. As a matter of fact, it would be easy to take up a hundred apparent faults instead of two, because there is hardly any known rule of technique that Mr. Conrad does not deliberately break when he chooses,—for of what good are rules based on the practice of the older writers save to be broken by the new writer who happens to be big and strong enough to justify his iconoclasm? But the two reproaches in question are: first, that he follows no

logical development of a story, but goes zigzagging back and forth, from east to west, from past to future, apparently quite without purpose or orientation. And, secondly, that he has no sense of proportion, that some parts of his stories are inordinately long, and others absurdly short; that he will squander a full-length plot on a short story, and amplify a mere episode into four hundred pages. Both these charges are true,—a fact that does not matter in itself, but does vitally matter if he fails to prove that for his specific purpose his way is the one and only way to get the best result.

Did you ever watch a common garden spider preparing to spin its web? From some apparently irrelevant point on a leaf or branch, it suddenly drops a number of inches to some other equally irrelevant point; then it proceeds at a tangent to a new point of departure, hesitates, retraces its steps, picks up some lost thread, crosses and recrosses its path, pausing to tie a knot here and there,—and all of a sudden this apparently aimless zigzagging takes on a definite design, of perfect and marvelous symmetry. Now, it may be cheerfully granted that this would not be the approved method of knitting stockings or weaving calico; there are some purposes, and worthy ones, where the conventional, straight-ahead method is praiseworthy. But there are certain types of genius that must work according to

their inborn nature: and it happens that Mr. Conrad shares with the spider the genius of the zig-zag method, and by the help of it spins fabrics quite as marvelous and inimitable. He cannot help himself; his mind works in that way. When, in *Almayer's Folly*, he tells us the story of the degeneration of a white man exiled in the heart of the Malay Peninsula, and of his crushing disappointment at the marriage of his half-caste daughter with a native, it is characteristic of him that the story should open when the end is already in sight, and that a majority of the chapters should be concerned with filling in the missing links; still more characteristic that a subsequent volume, *The Outcast of the Island*, announced as a sequel, should prove to be, not a continuation,—since *Almayer's Folly* left nothing to continue,—but rather a sort of preface, reverting to the earlier days of Almayer's prosperity and his daughter's infancy. A still more convincing proof that this is the way in which Mr. Conrad sees a story is that he adopts the same identical method for telling his own biography. *A Personal Record* is an exceptionally frank and self-revealing document covering Mr. Conrad's entire life, from his earliest recollections down to the present day; but the first of its eight chapters opens during the winter in the early nineties, when he was icebound in the river harbor of Rouen,

when he was engaged in writing the tenth chapter of *Almayer's Folly*,—and no two chapters and scarcely two pages are consecutive in point of time. And the reason for this is so palpable that even a dunce could hardly miss it. The greatest adventure that Mr. Conrad's soul ever underwent was his first experiment in fiction: and accordingly his biography is built up with the deliberate intent of making the genesis of *Almayer's Folly*, from its inception to its final publication, the one triumphant *leitmotiv* of his whole life history.

In precisely the same way we may explain the indirect and zigzag progress of his other writings. Your cut-and-dried critic, who insists on measuring a mountain with a footrule and quarrels with it for daring to be out of line, insists also on labeling a certain character *hero* and another *heroine*. And, naturally, when this critic notes that his so-called hero drops out of sight for a considerable number of chapters, and, it may be, the heroine vanishes altogether in mid-channel, he feels himself aggrieved and says that the author does not know how to construct. The truth about Mr. Conrad is simply this: he is more likely than not to take some force of nature as his protagonist; in *Typhoon*, the leading part is taken, not by Captain MacWhirr, nor his under-officer, nor by any one of the two hundred coolies between decks, but by the typhoon itself. And,

similarly, in *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, the leading part is not taken by any one of the officers or crew,—not even by the Nigger of the title,—indeed, like *Vanity Fair*, it might be called *A Novel Without a Hero*, and with only one heroine, the treacherous, implacable sea.

And, secondly, as regards the question of sheer material length in story writing. It is a deep-rooted fallacy that there are some themes suitable for a full-length novel and others fit only for a short story. As a matter of fact, such a distinction is disastrously misleading. There are some minds who see in a battlefield a long-volume epic, a *Peace and War*, a *Débâcle*; there are others who, like Browning, see only an "Incident of the French Camp," material at most for a dozen lines of verse. The difference does not lie in the theme, but in the temperament of the individual, the fashion in which he looks upon life in general and upon some specific story in particular. In the whole range of contemporary fiction it would be difficult to find this truth better exemplified than it is in the work of Conrad. In all of his writings he has set his own pace, fallen into his own particular stride, so to speak, ignoring all precedents regarding a conventional proportion between subject and space, crumpling up a world-wide theme into the narrow limits of a few pages, and stretching out some transitory in-

cident into the bulk of a portly volume,—and yet the very last objection which a critic, who has learned to read understandingly and recognizes genius in unfamiliar garb, would dream of making, is that certain of his stories are too short and certain others too long. Take, for instance, his *Nigger of the Narcissus*—better known in this country as *Children of the Sea*,—being one of the many English stories whose titles have suffered an unfortunate sea-change during their passage into an American edition. Let any other writer submit the synopsis of the plot to his publisher, and, if that publisher knows his business, he will tell the author frankly that there is barely enough plot in it for a Sunday special, to say nothing of a book. Yet Mr. Conrad wove out of it a magic volume, full of the life and breadth and infinite variety of the sea; and, in the center of the picture, the inert figure of a sickly, malinger-ing negro stands out as clear-cut as an ebony idol against a background of ivory, mysterious, foreboding, the embodiment of fate. Or again, take ✓ *The Heart of Darkness*, one of the shortest stories Mr. Conrad has written, and at the same time containing one of the biggest, most suggestive of his themes. It is nothing less than a presentment of the clashing of two continents, a symbolic picture of the inborn antagonism of two races, the white and the black. It pictures the subtle dis-

integration of a white man's moral stamina under the stress of the darkness, the isolation, the immensity of the African jungle: the loss of dignity and courage and self-respect through daily contact with the native man and the native woman. The whole thing is a matter of a few score pages, and yet, such is its strength coupled with a certain indescribable trick of verbal foreshortening, that it gives the impression of measureless time and distance. We feel that we have spent years in his company, roaming through the murky atmosphere of physical and moral darkness—and still beyond stretch unexplored vistas, measureless, forbidding, unspeakable.

It must be conceded that Mr. Conrad's style, unique and finished as it is, does not make easy reading. It resembles nothing so much as the depth, the mystery, the riotous luxuriance of those tropical forests wherein so many of his earlier stories were laid. There are whole pages and chapters where you are forced to move forward gropingly, with the caution of a pioneer, peering ahead at the vague forms of thought that you see suggested; and then, suddenly, there comes an open spot, illuminated with the sunshine of perfectly clear mental pictures, crowding tumultuously upon you; a flash and flare of rainbow coloring seems to streak the page with scarlet and purple and gold. That, in brief, is an

epitome of Conrad's art; to keep you at one time groping in the dark, shrinking from unguessed horrors, dimly seen through the fog and mist; and the next moment to blind you with the unexpected flood of mental light. And back of his method lies a vein of unguessed richness, an inexhaustible mine of untold stories. He gives you the impression that, instead of pouring out all that he knows of strange lands and alien races, he is holding himself severely in check, —sketching in here and there one face and form out of the hundreds that elbow themselves forward in his memory; condensing these sketches down to the fewest possible, strong, impressionistic strokes, so as to leave space on his crowded canvas for other importunate memories constantly clamoring for recognition. Other writers before Conrad have possessed the art of painting crowds, jostling throngs in the street, armies of men on the march and in the heat of action; but they have produced their effects by a flood of detail poured out upon the page with the reckless lavishness of one who paints with a palette knife. Conrad's distinction lies in the power of suggestion, the ability to make you feel that, however much he shows you of life, there is vastly more that he leaves untold.

To produce these effects, it is not enough merely to will to do so. It is necessary above all

to be a consummate master of words, and at the same time to have a profound reverence for them. It is not too much to say that Mr. Conrad is in this respect the peer of Rudyard Kipling,—with this difference: that being an alien by birth, he does, in a deliberate and highly sophisticated way, what the author of *Kim* does by instinct. In this connection, it is profitable to take two extracts from Conrad's own avowals, the first dating back to the beginning of his career as an artist, in about 1897; the second representing his latest utterance. The first appeared in a most interesting personal foot-note in the *New Review*:

It is only through complete, unswerving devotion to the perfect blending of form and substance; it is only through an unremitting, never discouraged care for the shape and ring of sentences that an approach can be made to plasticity, to color; and the light of magic suggestiveness may be brought to play for an evanescent instant over the commonplace surface of words; of the old, old words, worn thin, defaced by ages of careless usage. The sincere endeavor to accomplish that creative task, to go as far on that road as his strength will carry him, to go undeterred by faltering, weariness or reproach, is the only valid justification for the worker in prose. And if his conscience is clear, his answer to those who, in the fullness of a wisdom which looks for immediate profit, demand specifically to be edified, consoled, amused;

who demand to be promptly improved, or encouraged, or frightened, or shocked, or charmed, must run thus: My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you *see*. That—and no more, and it is everything. If I succeed, you shall find there, according to your deserts, encouragement, consolation, fear, charm—all you demand; and, perhaps, also that glimpse of truth for which you have forgotten to ask.

The second extract will be found in “A Familiar Preface,” which forms the introduction to *A Personal Record*:

He who wants to persuade should put his trust, not in the right argument, but in the right word. The power of sound has always been greater than the power of sense. I don't say this by way of disparagement. It is better for mankind to be impressionable than reflective. Nothing humanly great—great, I mean, as affecting a whole mass of lives—has come from reflection. On the other hand, you cannot fail to see the power of mere words; such words as Glory, for instance, or Pity. I won't mention any more. They are not far to seek. Shouted with perseverance, with ardor, with conviction, these two by their sound alone have set whole nations in motion and upheaved the dry, hard ground on which rests our whole social fabric. There's “virtue” for you if you like! . . .

Mr. Conrad is not one of the authors whom it is profitable to study book by book. In spite of a few dissenting opinions, he has not greatly grown in the course of years. He is one of those rare Minervas of literature who issued in the first instance of full stature. *Almayer's Folly*, his first volume, the product of five years of intermittent and laborious, although loving work, has remained, there is reason to suspect, the favorite child of his brain. The theme already mentioned, —that of the disintegration of the European amid the debasing surroundings of Eastern barbarism, is one to which he reverts again and again, in his later works. But coming first, it had, not only the glamor of a maiden effort, but, what was infinitely more important to the author, the nostalgia of vanished days, the fascination of *une chose vécue*. *The Nigger of the Narcissus* is almost equally a personal document. It represents a composite picture of the types of officers and seamen grown familiar through a score of years. It is impossible to appreciate even remotely the personal element of this book without having read a volume which followed it a decade later, *The Mirror of the Sea*. In reading that storehouse of personal reminiscences, one guesses between the lines how much heart-ache, how many lost friendships, what a host of vanished memories went into the making of that wonderful verbal

mosaic which American readers know under the name of *Children of the Sea*.

Close upon its heels followed a volume of short stories,—really short stories, in the accepted sense,—entitled *Tales of Unrest*. This is worth an additional emphasis, because it called forth the first big public recognition that Conrad received. Together with Hewlett's *Forest Lovers* and Sidney Lee's *Life of William Shakespeare*, it completed the trio of volumes which at that time the London *Academy* was in the habit of "crowning" each year and rewarding with a prize of fifty guineas. Most of the stories in this volume are wrought from his familiar material of Malays, half-castes, and degenerate Europeans; but there is just one story, "The Return," which is worth signaling, because it is his first, last and only attempt to do the familiar French analytical story of wedded incompatibility. It is memorable because it comes so exasperatingly near being a tremendously big story,—and instead, speaking frankly, it is a failure. The scene is London, the chief actors are an average business man and his still more average wife. He thinks he understands her. As a matter of fact, they have through five years been imperceptibly drifting apart. One day he comes home as usual, to find awaiting him a letter from her, telling him that she has eloped with another man. His surprise,

his conventional dismay, his whole cut-and-dried attitude of mind are interpreted with a skill that baffles praise. But, because she is the hopelessly average woman, she lacks the courage of her revolt; she comes back. And here comes the part that spoils the story. Throughout a dialogue that drifts on endlessly, the woman remains a living, throbbing bundle of nerves, and the man becomes a stilted, unreal mouthpiece of Mr. Conrad's vain imaginings. Mr. Galsworthy was absolutely right when he said that the hero of this story was one of the few instances in which Conrad had drawn a character that was hopelessly wooden.

As already suggested, there is no purpose in analyzing one by one all of Conrad's stories. Because of his peculiar trick of foreshortening, some of his longest books may be summed up in a dozen words. *Lord Jim*, which many competent judges regard as his masterpiece, is simply the epic of a man's rehabilitation after being proved a coward. *Typhoon* is an allegory, half epic, half satiric, of the impotence of physical life before the blind, unchained forces of nature,—a fable told with all the forceful brevity of *Le Chêne et le Roseau* of La Fontaine. *Nostromo* ✓ belongs to a different category. From whatever side you view it, it is too big, too complex, too full of dim, unfathomed places, to be easily or

briefly epitomized. More than one critic has openly avowed his preference for this book, and the present writer owns his personal predilection for it. It has more actual story to it, of a dramatic sort, more of the greed and sordidness and knavery of human nature, than any of Conrad's previous books. Primarily, it is the story of a silver mine and a buried treasure, in a little South American republic, where the people, like the republic itself, are volcanic. It is a kaleidoscopic picture of a grasping, rapacious conflict between a government, on the one hand, ever tottering on the brink of revolution; and the private owners of the mine, on the other, for such mutual concessions and privileges as would convert that mine from the white elephant it has always been into a profitable investment. More specifically, it is the story of the life of an exceptional man. Nostromo, as he is called by his English employers, the officials of the Oceanic Steam Navigation Company,—who coin the name out of the Italian words which they misunderstand and mispronounce,—is a Genoese sailor, who decides to remain at Sulaco, in the capacity of *Capataz de Cargadores*, captain of the company's lightermen and caretaker of the jetty. Now, the keynote of Nostromo's character is a curious sort of pride, a love of self-importance. By day and by night, sleepless, vigilant, alert, he is ever at the

service of the entire population, native and foreign. Of infinite resource and magnetic temperament, he has worked his way into the confidence and esteem of Spanish officials, English agents, and the scum and rabble of the foreign quarters; and none in Sulaco is too low or too high to touch hat to him and exchange cordial words of greeting. Perhaps the nearest approach to a brief analysis of the complex web of this book is to say that it tells how this Nostromo, whose pride and joy, whose whole stock-in-trade in life is his integrity, his unblemished reputation, becomes a thief,—it is a study of the curse which may come from the secret knowledge of a buried treasure.

In view of the personal preference above expressed for this volume, above his other writings, it seems worth while to quote Mr. Conrad's own words, telling us how large a place it held in his own life, during the greater part of two years:

Nostromo, a tale of an imaginary (but true) sea-board, which is still mentioned now and again, and indeed kindly, sometimes, in connection with the word "failure" and sometimes in conjunction with the word "astonishing." I have no opinion on this discrepancy. It's the sort of difference that can never be settled. All I know is that, for twenty months, neglecting the common joys of life that fall to the lot of the humblest on this earth, I had, like the prophet of old, "wrestled with the Lord" for my

creation, for the headlands of the coast, for the darkness of the Placid Gulf, the light on the snows, the clouds on the sky, and for the breath of life that had to be blown into the shapes of men and women, of Latin and Saxon, of Jew and Gentile. These are, perhaps, strong words, but it is difficult to characterize otherwise the intimacy and the strain of a creative effort in which mind and will and conscience are engaged to the full, hour after hour, day after day, away from the world, and to the exclusion of all that makes life really lovable and gentle—something for which a material parallel can only be found in the everlasting somber stress of the westward winter passage round Cape Horn.

Next in importance to the two novels, *Nostromo* and *Lord Jim*, come a number of mid-length stories, including *Heart of Darkness*, already alluded to; and *Typhoon*, that unequaled picture of the titanic warfare between sea and sky, in which a vessel laden with human freight is made the colossal joke of the elements, and we are shown the inimitable sight of two hundred Chinese coolies, together with their sundered chests, hurtling back and forth between decks, clawing and snarling like so many cats, in their vain pursuit of an infinite number of fugitive silver dollars.

Two or three more of these middle-distance stories deserve mention. *To-morrow* pictures a

father who has disinherited his son, driven him from home, and later repented of the act. Through long, lonely years he has comforted himself with the belief that the son will some day return, perhaps to-morrow—and he has brooded upon this hope until it has become a fixed idea, an obsession, that the son will come to-morrow. At last the son does come, but since things in this material, work-a-day world necessarily happen in the present, and not in the future, the father's clouded brain refuses to recognize him, because he has come to-day, when he should have come to-morrow,—the morrow which must always remain in the future. Equally simple is the structure of *Amy Foster*, the story of a mute, inglorious tragedy. It pictures the fate of a young Slavonic emigrant, driven, together with hordes of his kind, on board an ocean liner, tossed for days in a watery prison, and then cast by night upon the English coast, the sole survivor of a whole ship's company. Ignorant of his whereabouts, speaking an outlandish tongue, hounded, penniless and hungry, from door to door, a terror to women and children, who think him a madman, he dies at last in destitution, like a homeless dog, having awakened a passing compassion in just one heart, the Amy Foster of the title. In reducing these crowded, concentrated stories of Conrad's to a mere skeleton, it is so easy to over-reach one's self.

It is only fair to say, by way of postscript, that there is a second interest in this story. Amy Foster, caught, like many another woman before her, by sheer novelty, marries the refugee, and then, strangely enough, and yet as the doctor says, not without parallel, after her child is born, she conceives a growing dislike for him. There is, perhaps, in all of Mr. Conrad's writings, no single scene more poignant than that in which the dying Slav, delirious from fever, forgets his few words of English, and, in his frantic supplications for water, which might have saved his life, frightens out of the house the woman who has vowed to love, honor and obey, and who leaves him to die in agony.

Falk
But one of the finest and most characteristic stories that Mr. Conrad ever wrote is *Falk*. Curiously enough, it is drawn, in a measure, from a memory of his childhood. There was a family legend of a great-uncle who served under Napoleon, and who, during the retreat from Moscow, owed his life to the capture and utilization, for culinary purposes, of a very old, very mangy, Lithuanian dog. "It was not thin—on the contrary, it seemed unhealthily obese; its skin showed bare patches of an unpleasant character. However, they had not killed that dog for the sake of the pelt. He was large. . . . He was eaten. . . . The rest is silence. . . ." In his childhood,

Mr. Conrad underwent innumerable pleasurable shudders over the story of the cooking and consumption of that dog. He confesses that, in sober middle-age, he still can shudder over the memory of that story.

I have lived on ancient salt junk, I know the taste of shark, of trepang, of snake, of nondescript dishes containing things without a name—but of the Lithuanian village dog—never! I wish it to be distinctly understood that it is not I, but my grand-uncle Nicholas, of the Polish landed gentry, *Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur*, etc., who, in his young days, had eaten the Lithuanian dog. I wish he had not. The childish horror of the deed clings absurdly to the grizzled man. I am perfectly helpless against it.

Now, Mr. Conrad does not admit any connection between this incident and *Falk*. Nevertheless, it takes no special discernment to realize that without that childhood thrill, something would have been missing from the tale. On the surface, *Falk* gives promise of pure comedy,—a trick not without precedent in Mr. Conrad's method of work. It opens with a grotesque wooing of a Dutch girl, phlegmatic, florid, and opulent of physique, by a thin, taciturn Scandinavian pilot, on board her uncle's vessel in the harbor of a Chinese river town. But Falk is a man haunted by the memory of a revolting deed; he shows it

in his face, somber, taciturn, sinister, and in his manner, his trick of periodically covering his features with both hands, and then drawing them downwards with a slow, shuddering movement, as though to wipe away the vision of a waking nightmare. The truth is that once, under the dire stress of shipwreck and starvation, it had become evident that human flesh alone stood between a whole ship's crew and death. In the face of this horror, they had not drawn lots, but had fallen upon one another like wild beasts, and Falk, in whom the lust for life had been strongest, was the sole survivor. For six years this memory has haunted him; and now his suffering is doubled, because he has at last found a woman "generous of form, Olympian and simple, indeed the siren to fascinate the dark navigator," and he is confronted with the question whether any woman could knowingly wed a man who has been guilty of cannibalism.

Of Mr. Conrad's more recent books it is not necessary to speak at this time and in this place. Whatever he does, whether alone or in collaboration, whether in the form of fiction or personal reminiscence, is all essentially imbued with the same spirit, and stamped with the same careful and deliberate workmanship, the same daring originality of style. But the true, the unadulterated soul of Conrad is in the books of his middle period, in

the shorter stories, such as *Typhoon* and *Heart of Darkness*, in novels like *Nostromo* and *Lord Jim*. To spend time analyzing his tales of anarchists, whether in London, as in *The Secret Agent*, or in Russia, as in *Under Western Eyes*, would be for the present purpose an anticlimax. It is true that Mr. Conrad is a sort of literary amphibian; he is almost as much at home when writing of the land as of the sea. None the less, the latter is his true abode, and his best pages are those that deal with ships and harbors, docks and quays, sluggish tropical rivers, swarming water fronts, and all the motley crowds, the flaring colors, the babel of speech, the unnumbered and indistinguishable mixture of racial types and nationalities, to be found nowhere on earth save where land and sea touch shoulders. Yet, if one were making a prediction, it would be safest to say that Mr. Conrad will live longest in his pages of the life on ships in mid-ocean. In certain unforgettable pages in *The Mirror of the Sea*, he tells us of a first mate under whom he once sailed, and who, during the long weeks spent in an Australian port, habitually returned from shore intoxicated, in the mid watches of the night. And one night, when more unsteady than usual, the mate lingered on deck a moment, swaying heavily and supporting himself on his companion's arm, and voiced his wish that he were out at sea: "Ports are no good;

ships rot, men go to the devil!" And that one sentence sums up the difference between Conrad's stories of the sea and of the harbor. They are equally good, equally poignant with truth; but on the one hand, the stories of the sea breathe freely of ozone and clean salt spray, and simple faith and bravery; and on the other, the stories of the harbor are redolent of physical and moral decay: "Ships rot, men go to the devil." Throughout Conrad's stories, he shows us man fighting a losing fight; but at sea it is a physical fight, and on land it is a moral one. In either case, his workmanship remains, as it always has been, very nearly flawless.



WILLIAM FREND DE MORGAN

WILLIAM FREND DE MORGAN

OF the various English novelists who have come into prominence since the opening of the twentieth century, the case of Mr. De Morgan is in a number of ways exceptional. Here we have a man in advanced middle age suddenly and successfully invading a new field of art, breaking all records for belated achievement in fiction, venturing with the courage of inexperience to give us stories running close upon a quarter-million of words and written in the manner of half a century ago,—and nevertheless receiving an immediate, enthusiastic and widespread acclaim almost without precedent. It is probably for these reasons that practically all the critics who have devoted any extended space to an analysis of Mr. De Morgan's writings have bestowed a quite disproportionate attention upon genealogical and biographical details,—much as though the author in question were a newly discovered zoölogical species, and it behooved them to trace carefully his line of evolution.

For practical purposes of criticism, however, all that we need to remember about Mr. De Morgan's personal history is that he began life as an

artist, abandoned painting five years later in favor of making designs for stained glass, entered shortly afterward upon the manufacture of pottery, and, in spite of small pecuniary returns, continued to devote himself to ceramics until the age of sixty-four, when his first novel, *Joseph Vance*, was published. These few brief details picture a man who, in spite of versatility, has always consistently adhered to one or another form of creative art; yet, quite early in life, rejected that form which, even more than literature, demands an inborn gift for grouping and composition, a fine instinct for proportion and symmetry. Mr. De Morgan's chief preoccupation, throughout half a normal lifetime, was the beauty of minute detail, the quality of glaze upon a teacup, the excellence of color or design in a tile. His is the type of mind which gradually, through the passage of years, might be expected to gather up a treasure-house of fine, delicate, unique ideas about life in general, much as a connoisseur gathers together rare gems of porcelain, quite indifferent as to whether they group themselves harmoniously upon their respective shelves.

In view of these facts, Mr. De Morgan's first novel proved to be precisely what might have been expected: a novel almost destitute of plot construction, and with as many loose ends of narrative, as many interruptions and asides of author

to gentle reader as may be found in Dickens and Thackeray in their most unrestrained mood. The author of *Joseph Vance* may or may not be a reader of modern fiction; but so far as the internal evidence of his own volumes goes, his reading may well have stopped with the decease of the great Early Victorians. One looks in vain for any trace of his having profited from Hardy or Meredith, from Henry James or Rudyard Kipling or Joseph Conrad, or from any one of that splendid band of Frenchmen who, in recent years, have raised the technique of plot to the level of a fine art. There is something about the term "Early-Victorian" which Mr. De Morgan seems vaguely to resent. He protests that there is no good reason for affixing this label to him permanently, merely because the scenes of his earlier books were laid some fifty years ago, and that the public is unjust in finding fault with him for choosing in his later volumes either to go back a couple of centuries earlier or to come down a generation or so nearer to our own time. Apparently Mr. De Morgan has misunderstood the spirit of a good deal of the adverse criticism that followed *An Affair of Dishonor*. The trouble was not with the supposed date of the story, but with the quality of the achievement as a whole. It makes no difference in what century or country the author of *A Likely Story* may choose to lay his scenes: he

himself remains consistently Early-Victorian in spirit. For, be it said without offence, Mr. De Morgan is, in a mild sense, a literary anachronism,—as, in a slighter degree, Du Maurier was before him,—and his best work, the work by which he is most likely to be remembered, is that which in time and atmosphere best harmonizes with the spirit in which it is conceived.

No discerning critic could read *Joseph Vance* without saying: "Here we have the work of an author who drives his pen ahead largely at haphazard, with only a minimum of preconception to help him out, and largely deriving his pleasure and inspiration from the surprises which his characters every little while persist in forcing upon him. This is precisely the method of the authors of *Vanity Fair* and the *Pickwick Papers*; it is a method rendered well-nigh obsolete by the requirements of modern craftsmanship: yet it is still the method of Mr. De Morgan."

I asked him (records Mr. E. V. Lucas, one of his most indulgent critics) what were his methods of work, and he replied that his only method was to sit before a piece of paper with his pen in his hand—in summer in Chelsea, and in winter in Florence—and wait for the words to come. It sounds very simple; about two thousand words a day is his average, and he rejects about as much as he keeps. He has a very definite general idea before him, but many of the

details surprise him as much as they surprise the reader. In other words, his novels, like *Topsy*, are not born, but grow.

And here is an even franker confession, recorded *verbatim* by Mr. Bram Stoker:

I make no scenario. I just go on finding, as one often does, such inspiration as is necessary from my pen. I find that the mere holding of a pen makes me think. The pen even seems to have some consciousness of its own. It can certainly begin the work. Then I forget all about it, and go whithersoever thought or the characters lead me.

It is due, no doubt, to this distinctly amorphous quality of his writings that Lady Cecil remarked in what another critic has termed her "somewhat supercilious manner," that "Agreed as we are that Mr. De Morgan's success is deserved, we are yet more agreed that his deserved success has had very little to do with art." Without attempting to minimize Mr. De Morgan's deficiencies, one must concede that so sweeping a judgment is unfair. Construction of plot is not the only element in fiction writing that requires art. There is the equally important art of portrait painting, and in this respect Mr. De Morgan has achieved an enviable fame. He is one of the few writers since Trollope who have been conspicuously suc-

cessful in portraying convincingly the slow growth and development of character through a long succession of years.

On the other hand, it does not do to overlook entirely Mr. De Morgan's weakness in technique, on the ground advanced by one of his enthusiastic champions, that he is "one of those authors who are big enough to break all the rules." The authors who are big enough to break all the rules content themselves with breaking one or two or perhaps half a dozen, and adhere all the more scrupulously to the others, to atone for the liberties they have taken. A departure from rule is vindicated only when the author guilty of such boldness succeeds in obtaining bigger, better results than he could have obtained in the accepted, conventional way. Otherwise, the most that may be said is that his book is good, not because of his disregard of rules, but in spite of it. And this judgment applies in large measure to Mr. De Morgan.

Let us consider briefly what this middle-aged gentleman with the Early-Victorian mind has actually achieved in the seven years since he launched upon a tardy literary career. There are, up to date, six uniform volumes, of portly and imposing appearance. No greater mistake can be made than to attempt to read them hastily; they are essentially designed for the leisurely-

minded reader, who can wait without impatience until day after to-morrow or week after next before learning whom Lossie married, or whether Joseph proposed a second time to Janey, or what old Vance had saved so carefully in the rescued package. The interest is not in the suspense of expectation, but in the pervading sense of kindly optimism, the whimsical humor, the author's own obvious share in our enjoyment of each and all of his characters. Some of these volumes almost defy an attempt to condense their substance into a brief paragraph. *Joseph Vance*, for instance, may be baldly described as the life history of a boy, rescued almost from the gutter and educated by a kind-hearted and cultured gentleman, for whose younger daughter, five years older than himself, the boy conceives a romantic attachment that never dies out, and that much later in the story prompts him to take upon his own shoulders the guilt of the girl's brother, in order to spare her pain. But this gives literally no idea of the inimitable quality of this rare and tender story, that has made the names of Christopher Vance and Dr. Thorpe, Violet and Lossie, Jeanie and Janey, household words among untold scores of readers. Or we might try again and tell how this story would never have had a start had not Christopher Vance tried to drown his sorrow at losing his job, and after absorbing more half-

pints of beer than was discreet, quarreled with a "sweep" for having "crooked a hinsect," lurking in the bottom of the glass, and in the fight that ensued, seriously injured his spine by falling backward upon an upstanding brick. The sobriety resulting from some weeks in the hospital; an illogical purchase, from a pedlar, of a second-hand sign-board, by which, thanks to some alteration in the name, he proclaimed himself a builder and drain-man; sudden trouble with the flues and the drains at the neighboring house of Dr. Thorpe, and an emergency call upon Vance, who, despite the sign, had never dug a drain nor built a flue in his life:—these are just a few of the initial details that lead to an acquaintance between two families apparently hopelessly separated in the social scale, and open brilliant prospects for the future of Vance's six-year-old son Joe. Yet this method is even less satisfactory than the other; because, at this rate the epitome would run to several thousand words; and even then it would fail to explain why the heroine, Lossie, remains in our thoughts as the embodiment of all that is essentially feminine and good and lovable. The secret of her charm eludes us: there is no single verbal description that sets her plainly before us with the blunt frankness of detail such as one finds in a passport. We see her through the eyes of the men who love her; we see her through

the gentle witchery of her spoken words, and through the influence she diffuses around her. And perhaps the secret lies in this: that because she is surrounded by this sort of halo of vagueness, each one of us is free to picture her after the fancy of his own heart.

Alice-for-Short is in one sense a companion piece to *Joseph Vance*. This time, instead of a boy, it is a little girl who is rescued from the gutter and adopted by well-to-do people; instead of owing her good luck to a drunken father, half killed in a fair fight, she receives her blessing in disguise through the murder of her drunken mother, whose husband completes his task by committing suicide. Alice, both as a child and later, as she approaches maturity, is another of Mr. De Morgan's triumphs in feminine portraiture, a worthy companion piece to Lossie, yet not likely to usurp the latter's rightful priority in the affections of the majority of readers. One feels that in creating his first heroine, Mr. De Morgan gave us the best that there was in him, the favorite and most perfect of his dream-women; and in subsequent books he has to content himself with stars of lesser magnitude,—much as Joseph Vance, when he found that Lossie was unattainable, must needs content himself with Janey. But the real reason why *Alice-for-Short* does not wear quite as well as *Joseph Vance*, does not tempt us back

to it for a second and third reading, is because, while still unmistakably Early-Victorian, it is not of the same sustained quality. Those who love their Thackeray may be fearlessly referred to Mr. De Morgan's earliest book; but *Alice-for-Short* is largely diluted with Wilkie Collins,—and Mr. De Morgan has not assimilated Collins so successfully as he has Thackeray. A suggestion of ghostly visitors, the skeleton of a young woman discovered in an ancient cellar, a whole history of a forgotten crime glimpsed tantalizingly through fragmentary evidence,—all this in itself is good material for a mystery tale, in which character counts for little and the mystery counts for everything. It is curious that an author to whom his personages are all so supremely alive, so personal, so closely interwoven into his affections, should not realize that the public finds his interest in them contagious, and needs no melodramatic happenings to hold its attention. Nevertheless, the author of *Alice-for-Short* deserves credit for a most effective method of finally unraveling the mystery: there is just one person living who holds the key to the vanished past, and she is a frail old woman of four score and upwards, who for sixty years has lived in body only, her mind being a blank. A daring surgical operation lifts the cloud from her brain, and makes it possible to fill in the gaps of the ancient story, and connect past

causes with present consequences. The idea, of course, is not new,—for that matter, when do we ever run across any plot in fiction that has not been used before? There is, for instance, a close parallel in that now almost classic juvenile story, *Hans Brinker, or The Silver Skates*; and doubtless a little thinking would bring to mind a number of others. But one thing may be said with confidence: that no one has ever surpassed Mr. De Morgan in driving home a sense of the infinite tragedy of a woman, awakening from a sleep of sixty years, taking up life at the identical point at which her injured brain had ceased to record; taking for granted that a lifetime of youth and gladness and love still lies before her, and then little by little grasping the incredible, inexorable fact that all these treasures have slipped away from her, that she is old and wrinkled and hideous, a poor wreck of humanity, standing on the threshold of death before she has really begun to live. It is one of those rare episodes that refuse to be forgotten; and no critic does full justice to Mr. De Morgan who fails to give it a generous and heartfelt recognition.

Having made one story hinge upon the suspended consciousness of an old woman, Mr. De Morgan apparently told himself that it would not be a bad idea to repeat the experiment by substituting for the old woman a young man, or at

least a man still on the sunny side of middle age. Some critics have pronounced *Somehow Good* to be its author's crowning achievement: the present writer has seen this claim advanced a number of times, and every time has wondered vainly on what basis it was made. To be sure, *Somehow Good* is, of all six of his novels, the one which most nearly approaches a good piece of construction; it sticks most closely to its central theme, it has the smallest number of superfluous characters. It is a book which can be summed up adequately in a couple of hundred words. Some twenty years before the story opens, a certain young woman, good enough at heart but vain and rather headstrong, went out alone to India, where her future husband awaited her coming. Through a series of mishaps, he failed to meet her on her first arrival, and she stayed for a time with a married friend, whose husband's marriage vows lay all too lightly on his conscience. Just what happened during the days spent under his roof we are never explicitly told.—Mr. De Morgan has reduced reticence to a fine art. But what happened afterward was soon public property. Like *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, the girl lacked the courage to tell the truth before her marriage; her husband, learning it later, promptly repudiated her and sued for a divorce, but lost his suit upon a technicality; she returned to England, where her

child was born, and where she continued to live quietly, under an assumed name. Twenty years later, a series of coincidences brings the husband to her door. An electric shock, received in the London "Tuppenny Tube," has left no visible physical injury, but has robbed him of his memory. The wife, whom he once discarded and now does not recognize, takes him in; he soon falls in love with her, and they are remarried, and the problem of the story simplifies itself to this one issue: How soon will the husband recover his memory, and when he does, what will be his attitude toward the woman whom he once cast off? It is a theme full of big possibilities, and on the whole Mr. De Morgan takes advantage of them. But it rests on a basis of coincidence, and bristles throughout with glaring improbabilities. If the hero had not chanced to meet in the "Tuppenny Tube" the girl who was his wife's daughter, though not his own; if she had not happened to tread on his foot, and thus been led into a most unlikely conversation with a stranger; if he had not dropped a coin and fished for it under the seat, in spite of the conductor's repeated warning; and, finally, if the young girl had not obeyed a quixotic impulse and insisted upon taking this utter stranger to her home, the story would never have happened. And as for the second marriage, there are two obstinate little facts that insist on

being remembered; first that, although the woman knows that she has a right to marry, knows, indeed, that no marriage ceremony is needed, other people do not share her knowledge; they simply know that she was once married and has never been legally divorced. And, secondly, the husband, to whom the past is a blank, admits that he may have been married before, and is haunted with a vague fear that, somewhere in the world, a wife and half a dozen children may be in sore want because of his disappearance. In real life a man, under such conditions, would shrink from a marriage which, so far as he knows, may mean bigamy. The people of the story are real enough; some of the minor characters are strokes of genius; the scandal-loving "Other Major," for instance, with his interminable "I don't mind tellin' *you!* Only, look here, my dear boy, don't you go puttin' it about that *I* told you anythin'. You know I make it a rule—a guidin' rule—*never to say anythin'* "; and again, that delightfully literal-minded German, Baron Kreutzkammer, who, when a lady remarks, "How sweet the singing sounds under the starlight," corrects her by observing, "It would sount the same in the taydime. The fibrations are the same." Yes, the characters are real, delightfully so; it is what they do at certain crucial moments that fails to carry conviction.

Yet, in justice to Mr. De Morgan, it is only

right to add that the foregoing judgment of *Somehow Good* by no means represents the consensus of critical opinion regarding its relative importance among his novels. There has been, on the contrary, a strong tendency not merely to recognize it as the best of his volumes, but to hail it as a message of good cheer, a piece of fine optimism regarding the possible forgiveness of an erring wife and her social rehabilitation, as well as that of the innocent but nameless daughter. Now, it is true that Mr. De Morgan has succeeded in manufacturing a situation, in which, if we grant him all his conditions precedent, his amazing coincidents and interventions of fate, it is possible to accept the final outcome as fairly plausible. But the inherent improbability of the whole complex structure leaves upon the thoughtful mind much the same impression as though Mr. De Morgan had said, "Yes, there is just one possible case out of a million, in which infidelity and illegitimacy may be condoned; but it requires a series of little miracles as difficult of accomplishment as that of the camel and the needle's eye."

The next volume, in order of time, *It Never Can Happen Again*, is in point of form a reversion to Mr. De Morgan's early manner in its prolixity of style and multiplicity of themes. It has one central issue clearly emphasized in the title, but requiring in the narrative itself some little con-

scious effort to disinter it from beneath numerous other overlappings. The significance of the title is to be found in the well-known peculiarity of the English marriage law regarding a deceased wife's sister. Alfred Challis, a successful young novelist, has defied public opinion by actually going through the marriage ceremony with Marianne, who, although only a half-sister of his deceased wife, comes so nearly within the letter of the prohibited degree, that it is tacitly conceded in social circles that she is an "impossible person," whom it will not do to receive. Consequently, Challis, whose profession as a writer of novels of high life requires that he shall mingle freely with the upper circles, finds himself obliged not only to accept invitations which ignore his wife, but to overlook the slight thus put upon her and to manufacture a fund of conventional and formulaic excuses for her non-appearance, which deceive neither himself nor society at large. Now it happens through a curious series of accidents, which no amount of structural cleverness can quite make plausible, that Marianne's deceased sister was, after all, not Challis's legal wife. The disclosure of this little fact immediately makes Marianne's social position beyond reproach, even in the eyes of the strictest, most conservative adherents to the Church of England. The fact that recent acts of Parliament have changed the marriage law regarding a

deceased wife's sister, furnishes the justification for Mr. De Morgan's title. But one wonders whether there is not a certain intentional and underlying irony in Mr. De Morgan's use of the phrase; because it is impossible for any thoughtful person to read this book without realizing that while the story may not again be duplicated in the letter, the tendency of real life is to duplicate it continuously in spirit. Whenever circumstances make it possible for a brilliant, attractive, and rather famous man to be lionized by fashionable society, invited to an unceasing round of dinners, receptions, and week-end parties, while his wife is systematically ignored by a well-organized social boycott, the seeds of family discord are inevitably sown; and when,—as is almost sure to happen sooner or later,—such a man encounters some young woman who chooses to pity him and give him her sympathy, the seeds of discord take root and sprout with amazing fertility. One cannot read this book without being once again impressed with Mr. De Morgan's ability to demonstrate the importance of little things, to show us how the first vague doubts and discords germinate and grow; and how, not only for the people in this story, but for every one of us, there is at each hour of the day a choice of actions that apparently matters little, but that actually may make a vital and life-long difference. *It Never*

Can Happen Again is essentially a wise book, and its chief wisdom lies in proving that while we may learn to be independent of fate in large matters and rise superior to the big fluctuations of success and failure, we can never escape from the tyranny of the gnat-like swarms of trivial circumstances.

The hackneyed phrase, "crowded canvas," seems curiously inadequate to describe the almost unwieldy mass of social portraiture in this volume, its spacious and kaleidoscopic pictures of English life that constantly fade into a blur of dim vistas, along thronging thoroughfares and down crowded and oftentimes unsavory alleys. Whatever underlying purpose Nature may have in her working-out of life, the pattern is too vast for human comprehension to grasp. In our actual, daily experience, much that vitally concerns us seems hopelessly haphazard. In Mr. De Morgan's lack of art, or perhaps it is fairer to say, his deliberate intent to ignore art, there is at times a certain resultant realism that by its very disorder and lack of plotting approximates more closely to the truth of actuality than any amount of minute and purposed planning can ever come. It is a dangerous method; carried too far and too boldly, it leads to artistic anarchy. Yet sometimes, as in this particular book of Mr. De Morgan's, it achieves results that could hardly be gained in any other way.

It would not be fair to leave this volume without a passing word of tribute to an interwoven thread of interest, second only to the main issue of the story: namely, the pathetic love of the blind beggar, Jim Coupland, for his little six-year daughter, Lizarann, and the details of their life of poverty in the unsavory cul-de-sac known as Tallack Street. It may be freely conceded that in drawing certain humble and needy, yet none the less lovable types of Cockney, Mr. De Morgan stands to-day almost without a rival; and Lizarann, with her precocious wisdom and patient bravery, and Jim, the father, a hopeless wreck in early manhood, with nothing to hold him to life but his memories of the wife he has lost, and his fears for the child whose face he will never see,—these characters somehow fasten themselves so closely upon our hearts that, at least while we read, we forget to ask whether Mr. De Morgan can construct well or ill, and think of him only in sheer gratitude for his possession of the magic touch that makes us feel the kinship of humbler humanity.

There remain two recent volumes, *An Affair of Dishonor* and *A Likely Story*, both of which may be dismissed quite briefly, as not belonging in the same class with Mr. De Morgan's earlier work. The fault with *An Affair of Dishonor* is, as already suggested, not that it is an historical

novel, but that, as such, it lacks distinction. In volumes like *Joseph Vance* and *Alice-for-Short* and *It Never Can Happen Again* he produced work of a unique quality; whether we like them or not, we cannot fail to recognize that they are *sui generis*, that they cannot even have successful imitators. To have been equally successful in the vein of historical romance, Mr. De Morgan would have had to produce a volume similar in magnitude to Maurice Hewlett's *Richard-Yea-and-Nay*, or Alfred Ollivant's *The Gentleman*. Instead, he was content to write a book which, in manner and in substance, is easily outrivaled by the work of a dozen present-day writers, ranging from Conan Doyle to Max Pemberton. *An Affair of Dishonor* puts the heaviest tax upon our credulity of any of Mr. De Morgan's novels. It asks us to believe that after a young man has so far violated the laws of hospitality as to abduct his host's daughter, and is challenged by the outraged father, furiously determined upon avenging her lost honor, he adds the father's death to his earlier crime, and so skilfully keeps the truth from the girl that for long months she continues to live with him, wondering, though not too curiously, why her father does not write that he forgives her, and why no news of any kind comes from him. Of course, in the days before the advent of railways and telegrams, news traveled slowly; in those days

also human life was comparatively cheap, and a man's disappearance did not provoke the hue and cry, was not proclaimed in the flaunting headlines, that would follow to-day. None the less, even in what Mr. De Morgan has defined as "Pre-Cromwellian" times, it required an extraordinary number of coincidences and interventions of fate to keep the heroine unenlightened; and after all, the whole theme is so unsavory and so artificial, that the reader is well justified in asking: Was it worth while?

Mr. De Morgan takes much credit to himself that *A Likely Story* has been boiled down to the conventional length of the average English novel. Frankly, however, he is not entitled to credit, because the theme is so slight that it scarcely merits ampler treatment than that of a short story. A sixteenth century Italian portrait is in an artist's studio, for the purpose of repairs, and happens to witness,—if one may use the phrase regarding an inanimate object,—a certain scene between the artist and a servant girl, Sairah, and also the quarrel between the artist and his wife about this same servant, which leads to a separation and a hint at divorce. Now this picture is quite a remarkable one, and one evening when a certain imaginative little old gentleman is facing it, and dreaming over the fitful blaze of a wood fire, he finds himself listening to an astonishing story

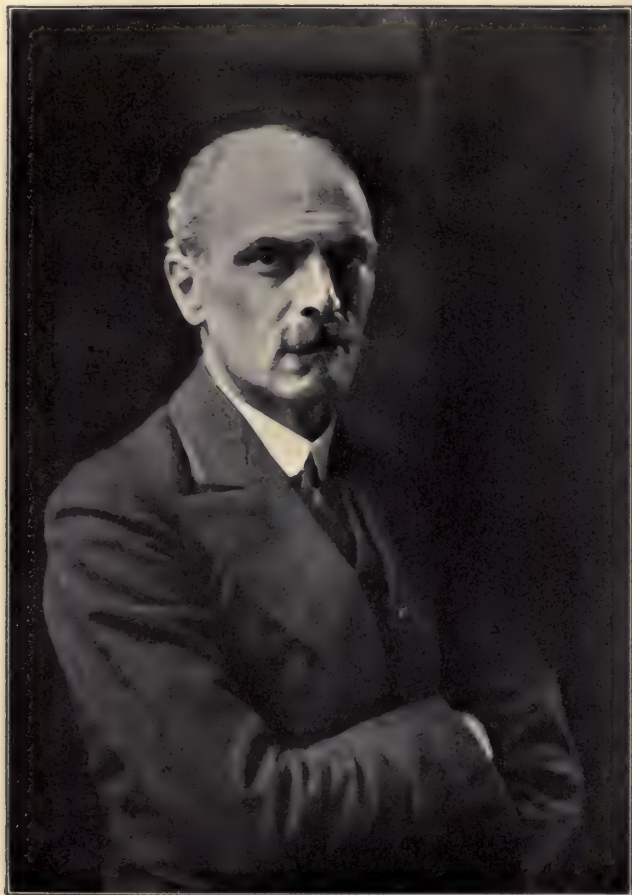
which the lips of this portrait tell him, a story of jealousy and cruelty and revenge enacted centuries earlier in Italy. Incidentally, the portrait tells of the foolish quarrel between the artist and his wife, and expresses a wish to reconcile them. So the little old gentleman, not quite knowing whether the portrait's story is a dream or an actuality, is instrumental in having a photograph of the picture sent to the artist's wife; and she, in turn, holding the photograph between herself and the firelight, hears the self-same story from the lips of the photograph, and knows that her husband was wrongly blamed. It is an amusing story, but one impossible to take seriously. It would almost seem as though its author were deliberately perpetrating a joke upon the public.

In conclusion, it remains only to be said that, if we regard these six books without bias, refusing to be influenced either by prejudice or partisanship, they show, with the one exception of *It Never Can Happen Again*, a steady deterioration. Each of Mr. De Morgan's volumes has its own champions, and naturally the critic who cares for good technique will feel more kindly toward the later volumes, which show a gain in that direction. But he should be taken, not for what he might have been, but for what he is. As Mr. Boynton has aptly phrased it, he has "more in common with Dr. Holmes than with Mr. Pinero." For more than

half a century he has been studying people, absorbing life, formulating his own philosophy; through all these years, his thoughts have been slowly ripening, like a rare old wine. And when he first brought them forth, in *Joseph Vance*, he served them, like a rare old wine, in the old bottle, —his manner harmonized with his matter. *Alice-for-Short* was still from the same old vintage, but blended with another, less full-bodied stock. And after that, one feels with each successive volume, that the supply in the bin is running low; it has to be diluted with a younger wine that has not had time to mature. For there is always one saddening little fact about those rare old vintages, —there is so very, very little of them to be had. But let no one assume that this is said in a spirit of ingratitude. Had Mr. De Morgan never written another line after *Joseph Vance*, his fame would still rest on an assured foundation. No future success or failure can amplify or diminish its fair fame. And even though it be an anachronism, we of the twentieth century should be the more grateful, since it enables us to claim for ourselves the honor which, in point of form and substance, would otherwise have belonged to the nineteenth.

MAURICE HEWLETT

THERE are some authors whose good fortune it is to go steadily forward along a fairly straight and evenly ascending path year by year, fulfilling the promise which it required no great critical insight to discover in their earlier works nor great boldness to point out. There are others who, possessed it may be of even greater gifts, but erratic and uneven in workmanship, follow a tortuous route, full of unexpected turnings and retraced steps. No sooner has literary dogmatism ventured to assign them a definite place in the current movement than they riot off on some tangent pathway, hotly chasing some new bubble of reputation. Mr. Maurice Hewlett serves admirably as a case in point. To-day it would seem incongruous to bracket his name with those of Rudyard Kipling and Joseph Conrad, as pioneers in a new movement in fiction. The Kipling of *Rewards and Fairies*, the Conrad of bombs and nihilism and secret service, the new Hewlett, the would-be Meredithian, have drifted too hopelessly apart. Yet there was a short period, less than a decade ago, when, in spite of wide differences in theme, in treatment and in outlook



MAURICE HEWLETT

upon life, the respective authors of *Kim* and *Nostromo* and *Richard Yea-and-Nay* seemed to form a little group apart from their contemporaries. And the kinship between them lay not merely in a certain dynamic quality of words, an ability to wring new and subtle meanings out of old and well-worn forms of speech, a trick of making you see, behind and beyond the printed page, a lengthening vista of thoughts unspoken, oftentimes unspeakable. It was something that went deeper than all this and that showed itself in an epic bigness of theme, an irrepressible virility of thought, an audacious iconoclasm of precedent, overriding and bearing down established principles of technique, and justifying the lawlessness by the results. Dangerous models they all three were, for the slavish imitator of small mentality. But there was a rich fund of new artifice to be acquired from each of them, by those who had the eyes to see and the ability to apply.

Of the three, Mr. Hewlett had, it would seem, by far the hardest road to travel and under the heaviest handicap, if he was to stir us to a tingling sense of reality. Kipling in India, Conrad in Africa and the South Sea Islands, could freely let their pens run riot in pyrotechnic outbursts of local color; life in all its primeval crudity, the raw, unmixed materials of fiction, lay on every side of them, barbarism and civilization in all de-

grees of transition; they had but to paint what they saw, and could scarcely keep pace with the tropical luxuriance around them. Their pictures carried overwhelming conviction because of the white heat of first-hand impressions, the unmistakable poignancy of a *chose vécue*. Mr. Hewlett's stories, on the contrary,—at least down to the point when, with *Halfway House*, he temporarily went grievously astray,—are largely of the stuff that dreams are made of; they tell of scenes and of people that he has never visited, save through the medium of musty volumes and faded frescos; because the scenes of his stories, or at least of such as it is a delight to remember, are the world of the Middle Ages or the Renaissance, and his heroes and heroines are men and women whose hearts have been for centuries a handful of dust. And yet, such is the magic thrall that he succeeds in throwing over his readers that, when still hot and breathless from a swift, tumultuous reading of *Richard Yea-and-Nay* or *The Queen's Quair*, one is almost tempted to fling down the gauntlet and challenge all comers to deny that it is Maurice Hewlett, rather than Joseph Conrad or Rudyard Kipling, who excels in picturing the tumultuous joys and sorrows of life.

Here is obviously something of a paradox, which clamors for an explanation. How has such an obviously bookish person, a literary dilettante,

with the erudition of an archeologist, and a preciousness of style that he has nurtured as one might nurture a rare orchid, learned to galvanize dead bones and moldering dust into an anguished quiver of pain and pleasure? His very language, vocabulary, style and rhythm are redolent of the night lamp and the study table; often he uses phrases like fine embroidery, traceries and scroll-work in an architecture of words. Tapestry Novel is a term that was first coined to fit the class of books represented by *The Forest Lovers*; and it admirably expressed the impression conveyed of an almost feminine delicacy of workmanship, as though each phrase were a separate knot carefully chosen and tied and trimmed, in the slow, laborious progress of the woven picture. And the perennial wonder of Mr. Hewlett's art centers in his power of reincarnation, his ability to show us knights and ladies of olden times, who have so obviously just trooped forth from dim and crumbling hangings, suddenly flushing into the warmth of life and youth and riotous passion. Undeniably, he achieves his effects. The chief distinction which marks his volumes as something apart, something differing both in quality and in kind from the current mass of so-called historical fiction, is his inimitable trick of breathing the breath of life into the famous figure-heads of history; making you feel the human pulse-beat still throbbing under the

yellowed page and faded writing of musty chronicles; discovering in cracked and time-dimmed portraits some trick of the glance, some luring curve of lips, some coquetry of dress or ornament that makes the human frailty of these long dead women a living thing, to touch us with a personal appeal. A war that cost the flower of the land, a battle that changed the map of Europe, interest Mr. Hewlett merely as clues to the hearts of men and women in high places, whose whim begot the strife. And because he possesses this magic power of visualizing the pomps and pageantries, the revelries and the bloodshed of those dim and far-off times, reading whole histories from a faded fresco or a rust-stained coat-of-mail, it is the most natural thing in the world to conclude that Mr. Hewlett must love for their own sakes these relics of the past that give him his material:—that he must never be so happy as when roaming through dismantled palaces and venerable abbeys, museums of old paintings, old furniture, old armor. Such is the mental picture that, on the evidence of his novels, one is quite likely to form of Mr. Hewlett's tastes and pastimes: and yet, as he has elsewhere taken pains to tell us, nothing could be further from the truth.

Somewhere in the pages of *The Road in Tuscany*, Mr. Hewlett, having occasion to quote from Villani's *History of Florence*, tersely dismisses it

as "a charming story, which gives us as much insight into the good Villani as into Florentine beginnings." This is an apt phrase, and one worth clinging to and making over, to fit the coiner of it; for *The Road in Tuscany* is also one of those rare books possessing charm, and one which gives no less insight into Mr. Hewlett himself than into the hearts of all the dead and living Tuscans about whom he writes so understandingly. Indeed, it is not too much to say that, when the time comes to judge the life-work of Maurice Hewlett in its entirety, *The Road in Tuscany* will stand with *The Queen's Quair*, as one of the two volumes which his future biographer cannot afford to neglect; the one, because it is the crowning achievement of a unique method in historical romance; the other, because it gives the key to the peculiar workings of the mind which wrought that method.

It teaches us, for instance, that as a matter of fact Mr. Hewlett has scant interest in ancient monuments, churches, palaces, the works of men's hands, excepting as clues to the men themselves; and that, unless it be a locomotive drawing a train of cars, there is scarcely anything towards which he feels a stronger hostility than an art gallery. The greatest of galleries, not excepting the Uffizi itself, are nothing more than "so many leagues of imprisoned pictures torn from their

sometime homes and flowering-places, and pinned to the walls. . . . They belong to the Holy of Holies, and here they are brazening it out, like tavern signs!" And not only art, but history and literature as well, interest him chiefly as means to an end, "short cuts to the human heart," whether in Italy or out of it; while "to talk of a history of Tuscany is to talk nonsense." The most he will concede to any of the Tuscan towns is "a biography which is the sum of all the biographies of all its unknown citizens." These worthy burghers and thrifty housewives, the Donna Bertas and Ser Martinos of proverbial speech, are more to him than all the poets and painters that Italy can boast. "Learn," he preaches, "to look upon cities, great buildings, pompous monuments, gilded altar-pieces, carved Madonnas, as so much harvest for the eye, neither the best nor the worst. The best is a wise man or a pretty woman, the worst a railway or a bore. There is plenty of room between these extremes for altar-pieces." Yes, man delights Mr. Hewlett; aye, and woman too, a pretty woman especially, and smilingly he confesses it. He will at any time interrupt himself, in the midst of more important matters, to show you a girl in a window, "leaning her bare arms there and crying strangely intimate matter to another across two streets, singing the pretty names of things not pretty, caressing

her friend from afar." And at a turn of the page, you will find him chatting with equal relish and equal intimate assurance, of Dante's Beatrice, no symbol of theology in his eyes, but a real, living woman, with a personal and physical appeal, a woman capable of love and of jealousy too. "Who she was or what is no matter. . . . It is enough for us to be sure that she was lovely and good, had green eyes and died young. To which I add for my private contentation,—that she was a little woman."

There in a single brief quotation,—indeed, in the five short words that make up the tag-end of it, "she was a little woman,"—we have the key to some of Mr. Hewlett's strongest effects, the clue to his gift for making vanished centuries live again, and to his failure to picture the life of to-day convincingly. The secret, of course, lies in the trick of the small, familiar touch, the trick of throwing in some detail that helps us to see, by appealing to our own personal experience. An author may be taking you through the strange, tortuous by-ways of some oriental city, dazzling and bewildering you with a medley of colors, scents and sounds, and then suddenly add the soothing, commonplace detail, "it was a gray morning and the streets were muddy." It tells you nothing of real moment regarding the strange city, yet it gives you at once a sense of seeing more clearly, for

it conjures up other gray days when you yourself have strayed through muddy streets in unfamiliar towns, and seen odd buildings silhouetted against the leaden sky. Of course it is a trick, albeit an unconscious one, serving to bridge the gulf of time and space, and delude us into believing, for the moment, that we too can clearly visualize the unknown. In the use of this trick Mr. Hewlett is an adept; and the reason why his use of it is marvelously effective in a story of the thirteenth century, and comparatively ineffective in a story of the twentieth, is fairly simple to explain. The familiar touch is really a makeshift, an attempt to find some common measure for things really incommensurate, to help us to form an approximate picture of something unseen. It ceases to be of help in a description of things within our own intimate experience. To mention that a certain thing happened on Wednesday, or that yesterday morning the first strawberries were in market, immediately makes a remote and fantastic setting tingle with actuality; whereas, in a story laid in our town and day it is merely one added detail that merges into the rest. If you tell a child, who has never visited a menagerie, that an elephant is a big animal with a long nose, you give him something for his imagination to work upon; he may not really picture anything within a thousand miles of an elephant, but the important point is that he thinks he does.

But if you tell him that a cat is a furry animal with prickly feet, you may, to be sure, evoke a memory of past discomfort, but the familiar touch has failed to give him any sense of new knowledge. And there is one more equally important distinction that helps to throw light upon Mr. Hewlett: we might, in describing an elephant, make several blunders, but they would not prevent the child's imagination from seizing upon the detail of the long nose; but if we chanced to be inaccurate regarding the cat, the one familiar touch, the prickly feet, would serve only to make our errors stand out more glaringly.

It is a matter of instinct,—and a true one,—with most of us, to feel, as we look at old-time portraits, Rembrandt's men, Botticelli's women, that there is a remoteness about them not wholly due to quaint costumes and faded pigments, but far more vitally to a physical and temperamental difference, shown in an alien cast of features, a different arch of brow and contour of cheek and chin. We wonder how men and women so different from the modern type would meet the emergencies of life, and whether in their hopes and fears, their loves and hatreds there was not an element with which we would find ourselves out of sympathy. Mr. Hewlett solves this difficulty with the calmness of omniscience. He brushes aside the differences as though they were non-existent. Human nature, he seems

to say, is a constant quantity, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. He makes his men and women, of whatever nationality and epoch, speak and act from big, basic, primitive emotions, shows them to us as strong, simple, ardent souls, dominated by some one ruling passion, symbolic of some single vice or virtue. They live fierce, tumultuous lives, in fierce, tumultuous times; and because they and their epoch lie outside of our experience, we yield to Mr. Hewlett's hypnotic power and give him credence, especially when he adroitly reminds us by his small, familiar touches, that his King Richard and his Queen Mary are at heart just human beings, like the man next door, or the girl across the street. But when he leaves the vantage-ground of the remote past and ventures to show us fantastic figures, creatures of legendary romance, in modern garb, against the incongruous background of present-day England, no amount of familiar touches can gloss over the glaring, blatant unfamiliarity of his picture as a whole. And this is why, with all his art, Mr. Hewlett's modern stories refuse to be alive.

But since Mr. Hewlett's blunders have been few and his triumphs many, it will be no more than a matter of simple justice to touch only cursorily upon his modern trilogy, and to linger in the sin-

cerest admiration over certain unchallenged and incomparable masterpieces. His earliest volumes, *Earthwork out of Tuscany* and *The Forest Lovers*, need not detain us. They were enough for the founding of a reputation, a challenge for the world's attention that could not be ignored, an earnest of better and bigger things to come. In the former of these two volumes, the author revealed the country of his predilection, the setting of what we must recognize as the volumes that he has written most directly from his heart. In *The Forest Lovers*, he allowed himself, more than anywhere else, to riot at will in the realm of pure fantasy, to create an imaginary world peopled by men and women of Arthurian legend. The story of Prosper le Gai and how he wed Iseulte la Désireuse, reputed witch though she was, to save her from the hangman, and all the delicate and charming idyl that follows, is wrought with a rare and welcome artistry. It revealed the author as a stylist of a new order, with a delicate sense of prose rhythm, and a reverence for the value of words akin to that of a jeweler for the value of precious stones. Not that he fully mastered in these earliest volumes the style for which he strove. A lack of smoothness, here and there, an occasional archaism so violent as to be almost grotesque, betrayed the labor of his art to conceal itself. But it paved the way to greater mastery. It formed

the apprenticeship that led to the fuller fruition of *Richard Yea-and-Nay*.

Not novel? The term "historical novel" has been so often profaned that one instinctively shrinks from applying it to such noble pieces of literary art as Mr. Hewlett has given us in his two biggest novels, *Richard Yea-and-Nay* and *The Queen's Quair*. Yet what alternative name is there to give to volumes that picture historic scenes and royal personages with such rare vividness and power? With the epoch of the Crusades for its stage setting, and the figure of the Lion-Hearted King for its focus of interest, the historic aspect of *Richard Yea-and-Nay* refuses to be ignored. Yet no amount of careful documentation, no degree of fidelity to early chronicles, of painstaking accuracy in mere names and dates could have created that atmosphere of the Middle Ages with which every page is redolent. The truth is that Mr. Hewlett is at heart a poet, with all a poet's delight in verbal form and color, in the caressing assonance of fluent syllables, the rise and fall of cadenced sentences. His *Richard Yea-and-Nay* is really a sort of medieval epic, a *chanson de geste* in prose, full of the sensuous word-coloring of jongleur and troubadour, the spectacular opulence of tourneys and coronations, the valor of battle and of siege. Considered as a study of human emotions, however, the book is essentially mod-

ern in its appeal, thanks to that habit of mind already alluded to, which makes Mr. Hewlett represent human nature as essentially the same at all epochs. And that his interest in the psychological side of his story is far keener than in the more spectacular brilliance of his picture, he himself sets forth in unmistakable terms:

Differing from the Mantuan as much in sort as in degree, I sing less the arms than the man, less the panoply of some Christian king offended than the heart of one in its urgent private transports;

and to such good purpose does he sing the man that the varying fortunes of war, the downfall or the victory of Saracens, the fate of Christendom itself become for the hour a matter of less moment than the inner conflicts of the heart of King Richard,—Count Richard he is when we first meet him,—and his love for Jehane Saint-Pol, Jehane of the Fair Girdle. They are a noble pair, as Mr. Hewlett has conceived them, tragic figures caught in the toils of destiny, very real, thanks to a rare artistry of words yet unimaginable outside their special setting of time and place. It is impossible in a brief epitome to do even scant justice to the intimate drama enacted between these two. It is the chronicle of a woman's utter self-abnegation, her sacrifice of love, of honor, personal liberty and

the rights of her child, for the sake of the man who has awakened her to the joy of living.

She was the creature of his love, in and out by now the work of his hands. God had given her a magnificent body, but Richard had made it glow. God had made her soul, a fair room; but his love had filled it with light, decked it with flowers and such artful furniture. He, in fact, as she very well knew, had given her the grace to deal queenly with herself. He knew that she would have strength to deny him, having learned the hardihood to give him her soul. Fate had carried her too young into the arms of the most glorious prince in the world. . . . What was to become of herself? Mercy upon her, I believe she never thought of that. His honor was her necessity.

She is an extraordinary creation, this Jehane Bel-Vezir, and one of whom Mr. Hewlett himself is obviously much enamored, for he has lavished all the riches of his art upon her. It would be difficult to find in modern fiction a woman uniting such prodigality of love, such fierce abandonment to passion, with so much nobility of soul, such self-immolation when the need comes. In her, as once again in Queen Mary, Mr. Hewlett has pictured a woman from whose spell it is difficult to escape. She holds henceforth a place in each reader's Dream of Fair Women, this girl whose fate it was to love King Richard, that "blend of German dog and Angevin cat," whom "all women loved and

very few men;" who saw from the start so clearly and unfalteringly that there could be no lasting union between him and her; and who had the strength to deny her own emotions, but could not stem the imperious current of his. The story moves with a swiftness of phrase, a tumult of incident that gives a sense of breathlessness. Richard wins a first brief victory over his twofold nature, leaves Jehane and goes to his father, in order to accomplish his betrothal to Alois, sister of Philip of France. But on arriving, he finds, instead of a joyous bride, "a white furtive, creeping girl, from whose hair peered out a pair of haunted eyes," eyes that half reveal to him a certain grim secret that causes him to repudiate the alliance in hot haste, and madly ride back, to interrupt another man's bridal and snatch Jehane from the very altar rail. Then follow the six "burning days of honeymoon," the unforgettable midnight siege in the wooden tower, the leper's ghastly prophecy, the swift strokes of fate that crown Richard king of England,—and then Jehane's compact with the Queen-Mother, the "flinty old shrew of Aquitaine," who none the less mingled her tears with Jehane's; her surrender of Richard to the Church and Christendom, and his final "Words of Yea," by which he consents to set aside Jehane,—mother of his child which is to be, although of this fact he is not yet aware,—and marry the "little

Spaniard," Bérangère. When he does know, the lion awakens, and then begins the "Book of Nay." Out of a red haze of war and bloodshed, certain facts emerge with poignant clearness: Conrad of Montferrat's plot to murder Richard through aid of the emissaries of the Old Man of Musse, Lord of the Assassins, "who lived on Lebanon and was most wise in the matter of women;" Jehane's gift of herself as ransom price of King Richard; the passing of Montferrat, and the dead hand shown in evidence; and the final great scene of Richard's death, in presence of the three women who marked epochs in his life. There are Alois, whom he had scorned to take as cast-off mistress of his brother John; Jehane, whom he would have married, had she not renounced him; Bérangère, whom he had married, "so far as the Church could provide," and forthwith deserted for the Crusades, —Bérangère, whom he had wronged in having given her "the right to anything." "To give it you I thieved, and in taking it again I thieved again." Listen to Jehane's words, as she kneels beside the dying king:

"Dost thou question my right, Bérangère," she said fiercely, "to kiss a dead man, to love the dead and speak greatly of the dead? Which of us three women, thinkest thou, knoweth what report to make concerning this beloved, thou, or Alois, or I? Alois came, speaking of old sins; and you are here, plaining of

new sins; what shall I do, now that I am here? Am I to speak of sin to come? Thou dear knight," and she touched his head, "there is no more room for thy great sins, alas! But I think that thou shalt leave behind thee some spark of fire."

A wonderful, passionate, tumultuous book, burning with a glowing fire of words, in structure somewhat lawless and amorphous, with characters and incidents crowding and jostling on each other's heels,—and nevertheless, leaving at the end a crystal-clear presentment of an incarnate contradiction, a nature eternally at war with itself:

So generous as he was, all the world might have loved him, as one loved him; and yet so arrogant of mind that the very largess he bestowed had a sting beneath it, as though he scorned to give less to creatures that lacked so much. All his faults and most of his griefs sprang from this rending apart of his nature. His heart cried Yea! to a noble motion. Then came his haughty head to suggest trickery, and bid him say Nay! to the heart's urgency.

The Queen's Quair, which followed *Richard Yea-and-Nay* after an interval of more than three years, deserves, even more than its predecessor, the appellation of "unique." One quality it has in common with the earlier volume: It leaves the reader quite indifferent as to how many other writers before him have handled the same theme.

The Richard of Mr. Hewlett may or may not be the Richard of history, or of *Ivanhoe* and *The Talisman*; but he is a living, breathing human being, a man whom we can see and understand, as we have never seen and understood the more shadowy Richard of history. Similarly, his Mary Stuart may not be the Mary Stuart of the old chroniclers or the modern poets; but he has made her a tangible reality, always more of a woman than a queen,—a slight, frail woman, wayward, changeful and moody; full of the witchery of her sex and desperately dependent upon human sympathy and adulation. In *Richard Yea-and-Nay*, Mr. Hewlett had a much easier task. He was less hampered by the recorded facts; he could still give free play to his imagination, without robbing the volume of its convincing quality. But the story of Mary Stuart is not merely a twice-told tale; it has been told a hundred times. Every reader brings to the reading of this volume a knowledge of precisely what is destined to happen; there are no surprises held in reserve; and no magic of cunningly wrought phrases could cheat us into accepting a version at variance with the familiar facts. Nor has Mr. Hewlett ventured to disregard them. On the contrary, he seems to have studied the original sources with the conscientious and exhaustive minuteness of a serious historian. He has saturated himself with the con-

tents of musty tomes and yellow letters; the uniqueness of this work lies in the use that he has made of his materials. He seems so unhesitatingly sure of the psychological value of each one of these old chronicles and diaries and memoirs; here is a writer, he tells us, who was mistaken; here is another who blundered badly, and a third who lied boldly and with malevolent purpose. Sometimes he will take a voluminous document, on which the methodical historian sets great store, and he will get from it just one suggestive fact, one single luminous phrase, and then fling it carelessly aside, like a wrung-out rag. And again, he will seize upon some fugitive page, some half-forgotten letter, and absorb it greedily, turning and analyzing and dwelling upon it, until he tricks you into the belief that here at last is the heart of the mystery. And thus, without meddling with the accepted facts of history, he has so subtly and insidiously probed down below the surface and suggested secret motive of love and hatred, jealousy, anger and shame, that the result is an interwoven tissue of fact and fancy which only an historical expert could unravel. Probably not since the days of Herodotus have truth and fiction been more ingeniously blended.

What strikes the reader most forcibly, however, on every page of *The Queen's Quair*, is that it is the supreme example of Mr. Hewlett's use of the

familiar touch, the final test of his power to make us see,—or think we do. He will take a dry-as-dust paragraph from some musty old chronicle, a mere catalogue of old Scotch names; and he will throw in a phrase here, a single adjective there, which will turn that catalogue of names into a portrait gallery of vivid, speaking likenesses. There is one passage almost at the outset of the book, which every reviewer is likely to quote, not merely because it is the portrait of Mr. Hewlett's heroine, but because it illustrates, better, perhaps, than any other paragraph in the whole volume, the wonderful and striking vividness that he can gain by the use of simple, every-day Anglo-Saxon words. A foreigner, reading it, might almost infer that English, like Chinese, was a monosyllabic language.

A tall, slim girl, petted and pettish, pale yet not unwholesome, she looked like a flower of the heath, lax and delicate. Her skin—but more, the very flesh of her—seemed transparent, with color that warmed it from within, faintly, with a glow of fine rose. They said that when she drank you could see the red wine run like fire down her throat; and it may be partly believed. . . . The Cardinal, who was no rhapsodist, admitted her clear skin, but denied that she was a beautiful girl—even for a queen. Her nose, he judged, was too long, her lips were too thin, her eyes too narrow. He detested her trick of the

sidelong look. . . . Beautiful she may not have been; but fine, fine she was all over—sharply, exquisitely cut and modeled; her sweet, smooth chin, her amorous lips, bright red where all else was pale as a tinged rose; her sensitive nose; her broad, high brows; her neck, which two hands could hold, her small shoulders and bosom of a child. She had sometimes an intent, considering, wise look—the look of the Queen of Desire, who knew not where to set the bounds of her need, but revealed to no one what that need was.

“Her trick of the sidelong look,”—there is one of those small familiar touches that have magic in them. It recalls at once a peculiarity in the eyes of more than one familiar portrait of the Queen of Scots,—a peculiarity that seemed to elude a definition. Now that Mr. Hewlett has put it into words, it fairly haunts us; nowhere in the book can we get away from it; at every turn of the page, we are asking ourselves to what extent the effect of the queen’s words is enhanced by that trick of the sidelong glance.

As to the story, there seems small profit in dwelling here upon what every reader knows in advance; while the especial shadows and high lights added by Mr. Hewlett cannot be given at second hand. All the old, familiar figures enter and play their part,—names that have a halo of romance and poetry around them; the bevy of the queen’s Marys; Châtelard, and Darnley, and Rizzio; the

whole host of Scottish lords, with Bothwell, like a malignant star, always in the ascendant. He is a well-drawn villain, Earl Bothwell; Mr. Hewlett shows no small self-satisfaction in filling in the lines; there are times when he seems fairly to gloat over him:

A galliard, if ever there was one, flushed with rich blood, broad-shouldered, square-jawed, with a laugh so happy and so prompt that the world, rejoicing to hear it, thought all must be well wherever he might be. He wore brave clothes, sat a brave horse, kept brave company bravely. His little eyes twinkled so merrily that you did not see they were like a pig's, sly and greedy at once, and blood-shot.

And then follows another of those luminous little touches: "The bridge of his nose had been broken; few observed it, or guessed at the brawl which must have given it to him." But if there is one little detail more significant, more luminous than all the others, about this Bothwell of the "great jowl," it is that of "some mockery latent in him, and the suspicion that whatever you said or did he would have you in derision." For it was this which "first drew Queen Mary to consider him," it was this which kept him in her thoughts; and indirectly, it was this which led them ultimately to wreak their mutual undoing. Of the end, it is best to let Mr. Hewlett tell in his own words:

Spited had *he* been by Fortune, without doubt. He had had the Crown and Mantle of Scotland in his pair of hands; having schemed for six years to get them, he had had them and felt their goodly weight; and here he was now in hiding, trusting for bare life to the help of men who had no reason to love him. Where, then, were his friends? He had none, nor ever had but one,—this fair, frail woman, whom he had desired for her store, and had emptied, and would now be rid of.

If his was a sorry case, what was hers? Alas, the heart sickens to think of it. With how high a head came she in, she and her cohort of maids, to win wild Scotland! Where were they? They had received their crowns, but she had soiled and bedrabbled hers. They had lovers, they had children, they had troops of friends; but she, who had sought with panting mouth for very love, had had husbands who made love stink, and a child denied her, and no friend in Scotland but a girl and a poor boy. You say she had sought wrongly. I say she had overmastering need to seek. Love she must; and if she loved amiss it was that she loved too well. You say that she misused her friends. I deny that a girl set up where she was could have any friends at all. She was a well of sweet profit,—the Honey-pot; and they swarmed about her for their meat like house-flies; and when that was got, and she drained dry, they departed by the window in clouds, to settle and fasten about the nearest provand they could meet with: carrion or honeycomb, man's flesh, dog's flesh or maid's flesh, what was it to them? In those dreadful

days of silent waiting at Borthwick, less than a month after marriage, I tell you very plainly that she was beggared of all she had in the world, and knew it.

Beside these two books, all subsequent work of Mr. Hewlett's is in the nature of an anti-climax, some more, some less, but none of it attaining a similar amplitude of theme, a like commanding dignity of treatment. If it were not for fear of doing violence to a fair sense of proportion, it would be a pleasure to give some space to his shorter tales, to the *Little Novels of Italy*, *The New Canterbury Tales*, and the *Fond Adventures*, and more especially the first and the last of these three, for they are many of them flawless little gems of artistry, glowing with a sort of verbal opalescence. Every reader will have his own favorites; but to the present writer there is no one of these tales which it is such a pleasure to read and read again as that inimitable tale of early Florence, "Buondelmonte's Saga." To-day the man who, with his marriage day as good as set, should with scant ceremony break off the alliance, for no better reason than that he had seen another woman's face that was better to his liking, might hear some hard things said of him; but the end need not be tragedy. In medieval Florence, it meant bloodshed, riots, a city rent asunder with civil strife.

How much of this saga is true, how much the coinage of Mr. Hewlett's brain, he himself would probably be puzzled to tell. He makes one feel curiously the remoteness of those vanished centuries, yet at the same time his pages tingle with vitality, as though reciting the happenings of yesterday. You see, as if in the flesh, Buondelmonte seeking to patch up an old family feud by forming an alliance with the Uberti; you see smoldering anger and black looks giving place to a strained and ceremonious courtesy. You see Buondelmonte, now that he is pledged, suddenly falling tumultuously in love with Foreste Donati's younger daughter, Piccarda, and rashly concocting the first clumsy excuse that comes into his mind for breaking off the alliance with the Uberti. You see the latter gathered in secret council weighing the evidence, anxious to be sure of the justice of their quarrel, sure that the affront has been deliberately put upon them. Then one more unforgettable scene; a lover in bridegroom's attire hasting to a rendezvous, waylaid at the bridge; a brief confusion of men and horses, huddled together; the flash of a knife or two; a dead man, lying muffled in his cloak, and the whole city in an uproar.

There are two or three other volumes which it seems worth while to mention somewhat in detail, before passing on to a brief estimate of Mr. Hewlett's ill-starred attempt at novels of contempo-

rary life. These are *The Fool Errant*, *Brazenhead the Great*, and *The Stooping Lady*. *The Fool Errant* is a less pretentious book than the novels which preceded it; there is a latent vein of whimsical humor in it which some readers have found somewhat baffling; yet it is likely to bring a certain quiet joy to those who have an epicurean taste for delicate workmanship in fiction.

The "Fool Errant" of the title is one Francis Strelley, a young Englishman, sent by his father to Italy to complete his education and incidentally to be kept out of mischief, under the guardianship of Dr. Porfirio Lanfranchi, of the University of Padua. Dr. Lanfranchi is briefly summed up as a "disorderly genius, a huge, blotch-faced, tumble-bellied man, bullet-headed, bull-necked and with flashing eyes." Now it happens that this ungainly, panting behemoth of a man possesses a slender dainty little wife; "sparkling eyes, a delicate flush, quick breath, a shape at once pliant and audacious, flashing hands with which half her spells were woven—all these, and that wailing, dragging, comico-tragic voice, that fatal appeal of the child, trained by the wisdom of the wife, completed the rout of our youth. Before supper was over he was her loyal slave."

The opening chapter of *The Fool Errant* reads like the opening stanzas of *Don Juan*, with this difference, that young Strelley was content to set

his lady high upon a pedestal and read aloud to her from the *Commentaries* of Villani and Malavolti's *History of Sienna*. Then comes the momentous night when the good Dr. Lanfranchi, arriving as an untimely interruption to the evening's reading, finds young Strelley stowed away in a closet, and quite naturally refuses to believe that he is there solely in pursuit of historical learning. Young Strelley is almost an impossible character; in hands less able than Hewlett's he would degenerate into pure burlesque. To every one else, the fair Aurelia, with her comico-tragic voice, is plainly no better than she should be, an intriguing little baggage, whom the worthy Doctor was quite right in discarding. But Francis Strelley, having once enshrined her as a saint, would believe no ill of her. Through his fault, so he believes, her husband had repudiated her. He must dedicate his life to the pious task of vindicating her and restoring her to her husband's arms. Starting on his self-appointed mission, he deliberately severs himself from all communication with his family, and goes forth penniless, friendless, nameless to wander through the disordered and warring states of eighteenth-century Italy.

There follows a fascinating chronicle of a strange and bizarre Odyssey through hospitals and prisons and monasteries, alone and in company of thieves, mendicant priests and strolling players.

It has been said that *The Fool Errant* was an attempt to duplicate the success of *The Forest Lovers* in a setting of eighteenth-century Italy, just as it was subsequently said that the trilogy ending with *Rest Harrow* was an attempt to do the same thing once again in a setting of modern England. Be that as it may, the atmosphere of *The Fool Errant* is still sufficiently alien and romantic to permit of an idealistic treatment, and in spite of actual places and dates the central love story is imbued with a spirit of romance that is nowhere forced. It pictures the gradual awakening of a man who, after having mistakenly exalted an unworthy woman, finds his model of constancy in another and very different type of girl whom he has rescued, out of sheer pity, from a degradation amounting to slavery.

Brazenhead the Great, considered purposely out of its chronological order, is a volume which tempted a good many critics to exalt it above its strict deserts, out of sheer gratitude for Mr. Hewlett's return to his own manner, after several years of literary vagrancy. As a matter of fact, it is not going to be remembered as one of its author's big achievements. There is in it a somewhat irritating note of extravagance, almost of burlesque. But on the other hand it is the old Hewlett back again, with all his rich embroidery of words and fantastic play of imagination. Captain Brazen-

head is not a new creation ; we had met him before in the *New Canterbury Tales*. But here we have no less than four of his adventures, each of them unique, each of them surcharged with concentrated vitality, and each of them conveying that special refinement of pleasure which we get from the realization of an inimitable artistry. As for Brazenhead himself, " who was born greatly, lived greatly, loved greatly and died greatly," there is none quite like him in extant fiction. The product of a coarse age, whose business, as he himself laconically sums it up, is death, Captain Brazenhead is not over nice in his speech ; but to those who are not unduly sensitive to the crudities of Elizabethan English, there is a certain enjoyment to be derived from a mighty blast of words like the following :

Who eats me chokes, for I am like that succulent that conceals, d'ye see, his spines in youthful bloom. You think you have to do with a stripling: not you, pranking boy, not you. I am a seamed and notch-fingered soldier, who belched Greek fire while you were in your swaddling-clout. I was old in iniquity ere they weaned you. Or do you vie with me in perils, by cock, do you so? Five times left for dead; trampled six times out by the rear-guard of the host I had led to victory; crucified, stoned, extenuated, cut into strips; in prisons frequent, in deaths not divided—what make you of it? And you to tell me that your green guts can pouch old Leather-tripes,

for so they dub me who dare? Foh, you are a bladder, I see!

Yes, Brazenhead the Great rightly takes his place among the big swashbuckler heroes of romantic fiction, and his death, like his life, refuses to be forgotten. In this final adventure, Mr. Hewlett has done a remarkable piece of work, one that fits in perfectly with our sense of what is adequate, and yet at the same time utterly foreign to his usual methods. Brazenhead's death is allegory, pure and simple. He is a mighty warrior, Herculean, invincible. To satisfy our sense of fitness he must meet a warrior's death, he must fall in a fair fight; and yet on the other hand, we could not bear to have him meet a mightier foe than himself. Mr. Hewlett has hit upon a way of satisfying us in all these respects. He sets his unconquered, unconquerable hero face to face with his own youth, with the man that he was fifty years earlier. The scene is a deep valley, the whole event is strange, portentous, titanic, a picture such as Doré might have drawn. And here Brazenhead falls, slain by his own youth, since "none but his own youth could have slain him, nor any slain his own youth but himself"—which of course is only another way of stating the universal truth that it is our past life that is apt to prove our worst enemy. *Brazenhead the Great*, although not one of Mr. Hewlett's big-

gest efforts, contains certain scattered pages, single episodes that rank with the best that he has ever done or is ever likely to do.

The reason why it seems worth while to discuss *The Stooping Lady* at some length is that it was in the nature of a transition work, Mr. Hewlett's first hesitant attempt in the direction of modernity. The flavor of a remote past was so much a part of the warp and woof of all that he had hitherto produced that the interesting question arose whether it was an inherent quality of his style, or simply a part of his carefully studied method of giving an historic atmosphere, just as you may give a spurious age to carved woodwork by the application of the right stain and varnish. At first sight, *The Stooping Lady* seemed to have adequately answered the question. There was nothing of the Tapestry Novel about the new volume, and yet, from the first page to the last, it was unmistakably Hewlett. There was the same sureness of touch in word and phrase, the same wonderful power of making you see precisely what he saw in his mind's eye—only this time the pictures were as unmistakably early nineteenth century as in *The Queen's Quair* they were Elizabethan. And yet no competent judge of fiction could fail to recognize that, measured by Mr. Hewlett's earlier standard, *The Stooping Lady* fell considerably short of full achievement. Why this should be so is not immedi-

ately apparent. The opening years of the nineteenth century, with its attendant unrest, its war-cry of reform, its violent clash of awakening democracy, with the hereditary arrogance of caste, are inherently as full of interest as other epochs of English history already treated by Mr. Hewlett. And there is no lack of dramatic strength in the story of a stalwart young butcher who resents with his fists the murder of his favorite horse by a drunken lord; who finds himself summarily clapped into jail for having thus dared to assert his rights; and, through the injustice that he suffers, wins the notice, then the sympathy, then the love of the drunken lord's wayward, impetuous, brave-hearted niece, who is not herself conscious that she is stooping when she bestows her heart upon a man whose clean, fine manhood has taught her to respect and honor him. And yet, fine as the story is in conception and in workmanship, it somehow lacks bigness, finality and enduring interest.

The fate of Mary Stuart will stir the hearts and fire the imagination for untold generations yet to come; but the fate of a London butcher, even a self-educated butcher with a poetic soul and a gift for oratory, seems somehow to lack the magnitude that we expect to find in Mr. Hewlett's later work. Even the author himself appears to have felt at the last that there was no better ending for the story than an anti-climax. So when the Stooping Lady

has stooped even to the point of standing beside her lover while he endures his sentence to exposure in the pillory, and the turbulent mob gathers, and the riot act is read and the soldiers fire a volley into the crowd, the author shifts his responsibility over to a stray bullet that finds its way to the brain of the pilloried butcher and saves the undeniably charming lady of the title rôle from the necessity of stooping any longer.

The real trouble, I am afraid, with *The Stooping Lady*, is that in proportion as the author comes nearer to the present day, his magic slips away from him. In a brief novelette, called *The Spanish Jade*, the scene and date are Spain in the year of 1860—fully half a century later than *The Stooping Lady*. But territorial remoteness counts for something, and it is quite likely that, if he chose to lay his scene sufficiently far away, Mr. Hewlett could write a novel of the present hour that would still have the mystic, intangible charm of *The Forest Lovers*. His *Spanish Jade*, as it happens, is a girl of the gutters, with a savage beauty, a wild-hearted, passionate, lawless nature. And a certain delicate, thin-lipped young Englishman, who saves her from a pack of human curs who are hounding her, is the first man from whom, in all her young life, she has received a real kindness. So, under the sway of love and gratitude, she stabs to death the Spaniard who would have killed them

both, and then offers her own life in atonement, to save her Englishman from the blood-vengeance of the dead man's kin. As a story, this little volume is not especially important. As a piece of technique, Mr. Hewlett has wrought in it a very perfect and surprising thing. He has told a story which, while you read, gives you the impression of great dimensions—a vast canvas, overspread with a vista of “a great, roomy, haggard country,” a kaleidoscopic, shifting panorama of scenes and of people; a sense of gazing into measureless depths of human passions; of having known and lived with the personages of the story, not merely through the brief space of a few printed pages, but through the intimacy of a lifetime. And yet, when the story is finished, and the cover closed, the human truths he has told are so simple and so clear that a single chapter might have embodied them.

It remains only to comment quite briefly upon *Open Country: A Comedy with a String*, *Halfway House: A Comedy of Degrees*, and *Rest Harrow: A Comedy of Resolution*. The three volumes form a trilogy, but the trilogy was obviously an afterthought. As a matter of fact, the second volume, *Halfway House*, was issued first, and had scant connection with the other two. It dealt with a theme that would have been dear to the heart of Meredith—and nine reviewers out of ten noted the fact. It told of the belated passion of an elderly

country gentleman, John Germain, for a neighbor's governess, Mary Middleham, by name—a young woman of ample charms and numerous embryo love affairs. Now, it happens to come to the ears of the middle-aged suitor that one of her lovers is a family connection of his and one of his prospective heirs. The girl is honest, according to her lights; on the wedding night, she makes certain girlish confessions, which leave the reader guessing as to the degree of their girlishness. At all events, they are sufficient to kill his elderly, half-spent passion, and their relations, during his brief remaining span of life, are strictly platonic. Now, there is a certain eccentric personage named Senhouse—John Senhouse—expert botanist, gipsy by choice, philosopher and outcast, whom the young wife in question runs across by accident, communes with, over a roadside fire, and accepts as her secret mentor. It is Senhouse who saves Mary from compromising rashness and convinces her that she really does not love her husband's cousin. It is he who enables her to return unashamed to her husband's death-bed, whisper to him a last confession and receive the mute forgiveness of his dying glance. But from his will she learns that the dead husband prejudged her, that he has left her a certain income only for so long a time as she remains a widow, and that there is a codicil, bearing date just prior to her wedding, leaving the cousin a generous share,

provided he too remains unmarried. Of course, it is natural to assume that the widow and cousin brave poverty for the sake of love, and defy the selfish terms of the will. But the reader would be wrong, for the image of Senhouse, the gipsy philosopher, has come between them, and the widow, with her eyes wide open, elects to leave home and country, and follow his nomad destiny through the woodlands of Germany. And at this point *Halfway House* ends, and the reader assumes that they will marry and live happily ever after—and here again the reader is mistaken.

Open Country, published subsequently, but dealing with the earlier history of Senhouse, shows how idle it was to have assumed his marriage with the heroine of *Halfway House*. It shows us Senhouse as a social iconoclast, a man in revolt against the established customs of his times, a man who has no use for cities, wealth, the luxuries of civilization, and who has a topsy-turvy code of ethics, among which is his chief dictum that the crowning insult that any man can offer to a woman is a proposal of marriage. Now, the whole plot, both of *Open Country* and of *Rest Harrow*, is simply the effect of Senhouse's irregular doctrines upon a very charming young woman, named Sanchia Percival, whom he first meets when she is wading in a pool, in quest of water-lilies, and whose limbs, thus unconventionally exposed to public gaze, the reader has

continually forced upon his attention, with the persistency of an obsession. Senhouse loves Sanchia, but with an exalted and mystic passion that precludes, at first, any thought of earthly satisfaction. Sanchia meanwhile absorbs his unwholesome teachings with the enthusiasm of a votary; and since she cannot have him, she proves her sincerity by going off with another man named Ingram, an ordinary, rather coarse-minded fellow, already encumbered with a wife. True to her principles, Sanchia continues to live openly with this man for upward of eight years—and it is somewhere midway in this period that Senhouse and Mary Germain try their unsuccessful experiment of life in common, also without the fetters of matrimony. Then comes the death of Ingram's wife, his offer to square accounts by marrying Sanchia, and reviving hopes on the part of her long scandalized family that at last she may be socially rehabilitated. But these hopes prove groundless. Almost on the eve of the tardy wedding, she slips quietly away in the night-time, to join Senhouse in his bare little shack among the goat pastures, for a honeymoon beneath the stars—a honeymoon that may or may not later receive the sanction of the Church. Such is the substance of these three volumes which, in spite of Mr. Hewlett's mature artistry, and some shrewd observance of modern types, remain unconvincing, exaggerated, at times almost grotesque. As an idyl

of romantic love, it is all as absurdly out of place as a knightly tourney in the midst of Piccadilly; while if we are to take the volumes seriously and to imagine that the preposterous doctrines preached by Senhouse in any way represent Mr. Hewlett's own views, it becomes necessary to regard them as distinctly unwholesome as well as inartistic.

Accordingly, we have Mr. Hewlett standing openly to-day at the crossroads, trying to follow two paths at once, and sadly in danger of making no further advance. It would be futile to advise him to revert to his earlier method of *Richard Yea-and-Nay*, and *The Queen's Quair*; for, when an artist has once outgrown a certain mood, outlived a definite phase of his development, there can be no successful going back; his heart would not be in the work, and it could not be sincere. Yet he ought to have given us more than those two volumes. His special equipment for the task was the patient labor of years; his whole style was elaborated to that one end, and the peculiar archaic flavor of it is something that he can no longer lay aside at will, but must needs retain, in spite of its incongruity in a modern setting. It is as though a musician, with slim, flexible fingers, trained to an exquisite sensibility, skilled to caress the tremulous strings of a violin with hair's-breadth accuracy, should deliberately choose to waste their magic touch in hammering out socialistic tracts upon a typewriter.

There is good reason to fear that the best we may hope to have from him in the future is further instalments of extravagant, braggadocio satire of the *Brazenhead* type, and the worst, other volumes of the pseudo-Meredithian type of *Rest Harrow*. } - ?
But this does not alter the fact that in the earlier Maurice Hewlett we have the chief living champion of purely romantic fiction, and a stylist of the first order, whose cadenced prose is a delight to the ear, whose verbal color has the gleam of many jewels, and who has given us at least two novels and many short stories which the epicures of literature will not willingly allow to die.

EDEN PHILLPOTTS

It is a simple matter and one requiring comparatively little space, to set forth the qualities that entitle Mr. Eden Phillpotts to high consideration among contemporary English novelists. He has not the perplexing versatility of Mr. Kipling or Mr. Hewlett or Mr. Ollivant; having found his path, he is content for the most part to tread it faithfully, even though it lead him in a beaten circle; he is wise in preferring to do one kind of thing with finished art, rather than half a dozen things indifferently well. Like other writers, he passed through an experimental stage; he made the very common mistake of thinking that merit lay in the strange and startling and sinister—and when there was a dearth of the sensational at home, he sought it far afield, as in *Loup-garou! Impressions of West Indian Life*. But these early tentative writings have left less than the shadow of a memory on the public mind. Mr. Phillpotts is definitely labeled as the author of *Children of the Mist*, of *The River* and *The Whirlwind*, the exponent of the life of Devonshire in much the same definite and exclusive way that



EDEN PHILLPOTTS



Thomas Hardy is of Wessex and George W. Cable of New Orleans. It seems inevitable to write of Mr. Phillpotts without making mention of Hardy; the points in common, especially in his earlier Devon stories, must strike even a novice at criticism. Even Mr. Howells, to whom Mr. Phillpotts came as a new discovery, a couple of years ago, found himself echoing this same stereotyped comparison, and adding to it another that we all must feel—the George Eliot of St. Oggs and *The Mill on the Floss*. As the product of a younger generation, Mr. Phillpotts has at least one important point of technique in his favor; he is more impersonal. Hardy, splendid and unfaltering painter that he is of human nature, always leaves with me an impression that he has chosen his characters for the express purpose of proving some theory of life, some canon of his somber philosophy. Mr. Phillpotts shows us his little group of actors on their miniature stage, and then leaves the outcome to themselves and to destiny. And his great strength lies in the exceeding simplicity of his people, his themes, his entire artistic material. His men and women, the best of them, are primitive, almost elemental; his situations all hinge upon the basic, primeval emotions, love and hate, envy and greed—and are worked out on lines of almost Greek austerity. In depicting life, the crude, untutored peasant life, he simply does not know how

✓ to be artificial. If anything, he errs too far the other side, and in depicting the speech and conduct of his rustics there is often a Zolaesque frankness beyond the immediate exigencies of the picture he would paint. But his grip upon his types of character, men and women alike, is undeniable. One feels that here is a weaver of pictured life who spins his thread direct from the raw material of human nature. And in doing so, he achieves some curious and striking results. The modern spirit, full of questionings and doubtings, has penetrated like a pestilence, if we are to accept Mr. Phillpotts's evidence, among these "Children of the Mist," and played havoc with their peace of mind, leaving them at a sad disadvantage in their efforts to cope with the puzzling problems of ethics and morality.

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It is for such reasons as these that, if asked to name the most distinctive feature of the work of Mr. Phillpotts, I should say that he enjoys the advantage of being unusually well rounded, that within a circumscribed area he sees life with peculiar clearness and sees it as a whole. His novels are in no sense religious novels, yet he never lets us forget that religion and scepticism are potent factors in our daily life; they are not sex-problem novels, yet he keeps in mind the fact that man and woman are human animals as well as embodied spirits; they are not political or socialist novels,

yet the existence of class distinction and of hereditary injustice between man and man is brought into the fabric of every page. In short, the little corner of Devon in which most of his dramas are enacted is a miniature cosmos, wherein nothing pertaining to human nature is alien to his purpose. This is his first distinction, his all-around and sympathetic understanding of humanity. And his second, hardly less in importance, is his artist's joy in the ever changing face of nature. As a landscape painter in words, he has no equal since the days of William Black. He is a master of the effects of light and shade, the glint of faint sunshine through breaking clouds, the shifting forms of distant hills, seen vaguely through curtains of slanting rain, the shimmer of moonlight through thin leafage, the riot of color when nature bursts into blossom—all these things he gives us with a prodigality that would be excessive, if they were not their own justification—if he did not use them so triumphantly to interpret character, to explain the environment and the influences that have produced certain human types. One is tempted to paraphrase a familiar definition, and to characterize the novels of Mr. Phillpotts as “cross-sections of life, seen through an atmosphere.”

The first book that brought Mr. Phillpotts into general notice, both in England and America, was, curiously enough, not laid in the district destined

later to be identified with him, but in the adjacent county of Cornwall—and incidentally proves him to be as skilled a painter of the marine landscape as he is of mountain and of moor. *Lying Prophets*, which appeared in 1897, is undoubtedly the corner-stone of Mr. Phillpotts's reputation. And yet the theme is as old as the origin of fiction itself. It is merely one more of the countless versions of a simple, untutored young woman whom nature has chosen to make beautiful, who longs for something better than her lot in life affords her, who lends a credulous ear to a handsome and cultured stranger, and pays the penalty which, under existing conventions, woman must pay for breaking the unwritten law. Joan Tregenza belongs to a race of fanatics. Her father, known as Gray Michael, is a leading spirit in the sect known as the Luke Gospels; a sect which finds a perverse joy in believing all the rest of humanity and a goodly share of their own number to be predestined to damnation. Bigotry, self-righteousness, pharisaical complacency have seldom been better portrayed than in the character of Gray Michael. And yet one realizes that he is a pagan at heart; that if it were not for the restraints of the law he would gladly commit, in the name of God, atrocities worthy of those ancient Phœnician pioneers who are the legendary ancestors of Cornishmen. From the time when Gray Michael beat his

daughter until she fell in a faint at his feet, for no more serious sin than attending an evening service at Saint Peter's, the girl lived in secret rebellion against her surroundings; but no opportunity for self-assertion presented itself until the advent of John Barron, famous artist, invalid of numbered days and faithful exponent of finished egotism. Joan, it may be remarked in passing, is betrothed to a fisherman known as Joe; and the sight of her standing on a promontory, in the midst of a yellow glory of gorse in blossom, waving good-by to a receding schooner, gives Barron the inspiration for which he has been waiting, the germ idea for his last great picture, "Joe's Ship." The substance of this book is the history of Joan's slow transformation under the tutelage of John Barron; the insidious poison of his esthetic pantheism working upon a spirit in revolt against the stifling narrowness of the religious creed in which it has been nurtured. Joan is a splendid portrayal of triumphant physical womanhood, instinct with the supreme joy of living; and she welcomes Barron's glorification of the divine spirit of nature, the divinity lurking in every blossom and blade of grass, as a doctrine for which she has been unconsciously thirsting all her life. Week by week she visits him secretly; week by week the picture of "Joe's Ship," with Joan as its central figure, moves toward consummation—and with it her will

yields to that of the artist. And, of course, the inevitable, which is also the irreparable, comes to pass. And John Barron, whose acknowledged rule of life is "to sacrifice all things to mood," passes out of Joan's life, with many a promise which he has no intention of keeping, leaving her to make pathetic daily pilgrimages to the post office at Penzance, seeking for letters that do not come, and hoping against hope for a marriage ring that will antedate the advent of her child. The ending of the book is weak; Mr. Phillpotts was at this epoch still straining after the unusual and the startling, still liable to mistake the intervention of natural forces for a satisfactory solution of a purely human problem. John Barron, yielding to the last caprice of a dying man, writes to Joan telling of his condition and pitifully appealing to her to come to him. It is this letter which sends Joan blindly out into the night, in her enfeebled condition, just at the hour when pent-up torrents are about to break their bounds in a devastating flood. Joe, her affianced husband, who throughout these months has been away, comes into the story at the eleventh hour, to find his promised bride a corpse, with a lasting stain upon her memory, and rushes off in hot haste to London, to exact vengeance. But here again he comes just too late, for Fate has already intervened and Barron also is dead. In two respects this ending is bad art; first, in the

intrusion of blind chance as a solution of the problem; and secondly, in the introduction, at the closing scene, of a character that has previously had no speaking part in the drama. Yet, just as it stands, this book possesses a certain finished workmanship and a truthfulness to life that eminently justify the praise bestowed by the *Athenæum*, that "nothing so powerful in this line has appeared since *Esther Waters*."

The Children of the Mist, the first of the really significant Devon stories, is in itself a sufficient corner-stone on which to build a solid reputation. I question whether, among his subsequent volumes, Mr. Phillpotts has produced any that is at once so simple in material, so human, so unmistakably a transcript from the life he knew and studied at first hand. It is not so well constructed as his later books; the plot is loose, diffuse, with too many side interests; the leading characters are disappointingly small at critical moments, and the final solution, as in *Lying Prophets*, turns on a whim of fate. Yet the net impression left by the book is of something rare and fine and true; something more spacious and more inspiring than a mere chronicle of a few narrow human lives—it is all Devon that he has given us, flung broadly before us in "a radiance of misty silver." It is the physiognomy of a landscape, the psychology of a community that he has tried to interpret in

Children of the Mist; and in a canvas so ample, the individual is necessarily dwarfed. If the two brothers, Martin and John Grimal, had not returned from Africa, after many years' absence, bringing with them substantial riches, Will Blanchard's courtship of Miller Lyddon's daughter, Phoebe, would have been met with less violent opposition, and Will's sister, Chris, might have found less tragedy in her love for Clem Hicks, expert bee-keeper and rustic poet. Will Blanchard's besetting sin is his violent temper, that leads him into reckless deeds the consequences of which he does not stop to weigh. When Miller Lyddon, immovable in his stolid obstinacy, refuses to listen to Will's suit, and vows that his daughter shall wed John Grimal, Will hot-headedly leaves home and under an assumed name enlists in the army, lured by fantastic visions of prosperity and fame, and tells his secret to no one but his friend, Clem Hicks. Months drift by, and slowly Phoebe's opposition to Grimal is overborne, her confidence in Will is shaken, and she consents to marry as her father wishes. Then follows an urgent message from Clem, and Will commits his second rash act by deserting and returning on the eve of Phoebe's wedding day, bearing her off in triumph and marrying her through the aid of an uncle in a distant village. The greater part of the story that follows, so far as there is any clear-cut story,

concerns the slow and at first almost hopeless efforts of the young couple to win forgiveness from the dogged, stubborn old father, his reluctant decision not to have Will prosecuted for abduction and, after two years of weary waiting, his inability to keep the husband and wife any longer apart. It is a slow, leisurely chronicle, witnessed through the shifting seasons of sun and rain; a peaceful chronicle, too, except for the stormy undercurrent of hatred between Blanchard and the man whom he robbed of a wife. John Grimbald guesses vaguely that there is some secret connected with Will's mysterious absence from home, which, if known to him, would give him a chance for vengeance. And after years of patient waiting he discovers the secret through pure accident. Once before, it was almost in his grasp. Clem Hicks, the only person whom Will had ever told, has quarreled with him bitterly, is about to square a grudge and betray him to Grimbald, when a false step off the lofty edge of Oke Tor lands him on the rocks far below, with a broken neck. And, if fate must intervene to save him from betraying the brother, it would have been kinder had it acted soon enough to spare the sister too; for by his untimely death, Clem leaves the woman he loves to face the world, not as a wife, yet as the mother of his child. But this second tragedy is subordinated by the author to the main issue of what use John

Grimbal will make of his knowledge that his enemy, now for ten years the husband of the woman he coveted, is a deserter and liable to arrest and punishment. The scene between the two, in which each arises to unexpected heights, the one in magnanimity, the other in a newly awakened desire to expiate his crime, is a striking instance of the author's ability to take a situation tensely dramatic in itself, and wring new and unexpected poignancy from it by making awakened conscience sweep conditions aside, as one might sweep the pawns from a chessboard. It is something more than a pity that, when Grimbal has decided to spare Will, and Will, refusing to be spared, has gone to deliver himself up, the credit should be taken from both of them by the accidental mailing of a letter that Grimbal meant to destroy, and that reaches the Commandant at Plymouth ahead of Blanchard; and secondly, after he had surrendered, prepared to take the punishment that awaited him, it is again a pity that his liberation and return to his wife and newly born heir should be due to the fact that, on the occasion of her Jubilee, the Queen has chosen to pardon all deserters. It is sheer coincidence and a blot on a story otherwise admirable in workmanship.

Sons of the Morning will not need much attention. Although the setting is essentially the same as in *Children of the Mist*, the substance of the

story shows a falling back to the author's earlier melodramatic tendency. The opening situation is not unsimilar to that of the previous book. Honor Endicott might have married Christopher Yeoland, whose estates border on her own, and been very happy with him, in spite of his volatile character, his inability to settle down to useful work, if Myles Stapleton, older, graver, of more sterling worth, had not chanced to come back from his travels at a crucial hour. But here the two stories part company. Unconsciously, Honor finds herself drifting into a closer friendship with Myles than is right for the promised bride of another man; before she is quite aware how it happened, she is in love with two men at once, and cannot tell even herself which of the two means the more to her. Christopher, had he been less impulsive, might have triumphed; but instead, he quarrels with Honor, departs tempestuously for Australia, and a few months later the news comes that he has been bitten by a snake and is dead. Now that her doubt is solved for her, Honor marries Myles, and settles down contentedly to a life which, if lacking the keen joy of living that Christopher's ardor once promised, at least offers years of untroubled domesticity. But it happens that Christopher is not dead, that the man bitten by a snake is a distant cousin, and that in one of his rash impulses he has quixotically allowed the

false report to go uncorrected, in order to insure, as he thinks, the happiness of the woman whom he loves and who has learned to love another man. Having done this deed, Christopher should have abided by it; no man has the right to play Enoch Arden one day and resurrect himself the next. Yet that is precisely what Christopher, the sport of his own transient whims, sees fit to do; and his secret return to his home, and the sight of him, suddenly and without warning, in the gloom of woods at night, costs the life of Stapleton's unborn heir, and very nearly costs the life of the mother. The plot fails to carry conviction, and drags on quite unnecessarily. The idea of three people making themselves wretched because the wife will not decide between them, the husband is reluctant to assert himself, and the other man is too selfish to do the honorable thing, is all so preposterous as to be almost grotesque. And then, finally, when husband and wife have their crucial talk together, and she awakens to a sense of her own unfairness and declares unequivocally her preference for him and her wish to be taken away where she will never again hear the sound of Christopher's voice, another trick of fate intrudes itself, the happy husband falls headlong from Teign's Head, and the widow, although she eventually marries the other man, goes through life with the secret and remorseful fear that she had failed to convince Myles

of her love for him and that his death was not an accident.

It is, of course, impossible, in the case of a writer so uniformly industrious, to attempt to discuss in detail even a majority of his volumes; and some of them, as, for instance, *The Good Red Earth*, do not deserve it. It has the customary flavor of the soil, but in essence it is a mystery story, turning upon the discovery of some hidden documents, and the identity of a child, supposed to be a caretaker's daughter. A book of very different caliber, one of the books, in fact, that really count, is *The River*. Here again, as in *Children of the Mist*, Mr. Phillpotts's dominant purpose has been to show the mighty and far-reaching influence of environment on character. If it were not for the River, the Dart, he seems to say, none of these lives would have been lived as here set down. It is an ever present influence, moulding characters, shaping destinies, emphasizing at once the ceaseless changefulness of nature and the mutability of man. In this volume, more than anywhere else, we get a glimpse of Eden Phillpotts's kinship with Joseph Conrad, in his ability to measure man alongside of the titanic forces of nature. Take for instance this bit of description of the Dart at flood-time:

From the granite centers of the hills, headlong down the rocky places, boiling, shrieking over steep

and shallows like a Fury with lightning in her hair, she (the Dart) came. From the playground of the wind, from the hidden secrets of her springs, swollen to a torrent, swelled to ungovernable cataracts, she poured herself between the heights; and the noise of her passing was mingled with the thunder, with the reverberations and concussions of the air and repetitions of the earth. Her hoarse ravings ascended to the sky, and, borne by echoing ravines and crags, fell upon the frightened ear; her maniac shout knelled death and disaster, and set the husbandmen shaking for their beasts. Into the valley she rolled, and rioted even as high as the branches of the trees that shadowed her; her locks of foam were tawny and her current black.

As for the story, it is merely the oft-told theme of the way of a maid with two men. Hannah Braidridge, "tall, full-blooded, with sleepy eyes and strong, budding passions," is the heroine. She finds herself wavering between Nicholas Edgecombe, a warrener, clean of limb and of thought, who dwells "among immortal things," and Timothy Oldrew, a gentleman farmer, essentially bad at heart, who nevertheless exhibits from time to time a momentary flash of elemental decency. Hannah's faithlessness, and her shifting back and forth between the farmer and the warrener, form the mainspring of the human narrative, which is necessarily somewhat subordinated to the central theme of the River itself. It is the Dart which is

the real heroine, the Dart that is full-blooded, with strong, budding passions, the Dart whose changeful moods no human heroine could rival.

It is not necessary to waste time or space upon a volume such as *The Golden Fetish*, narrating the quest of a great treasure of precious stones, hidden in the land of the Batoncas, in Central Africa. It may be defined as a fairly adequate attempt to perform an unfamiliar, if not uncongenial task. But, in view of the fact that Mr. Phillpotts is capable of better and higher things, it seems a pity that he could not be content to leave riotous romance of this particular brand in the eminently capable hands of Mr. Rider Haggard. It is a relief to turn to a subsequent volume that finds Mr. Phillpotts once more back in the familiar setting of the tors and woodlands of Dartmoor, and once more interpreting the strong, rugged elemental men and women who inhabit it. *The Secret Woman* stands high among the best works its author has given us; and, what is more, he has gained in unity of theme, as is shown by the comparatively few words needed to expound it. It deals with a tragedy as old as human nature itself. Anthony Redvers is in his heart a rebel against the laws of marriage, social and divine. According to his secret creed, " 'Tis only a wicked saying of the parson's that a man can't love two women true an' tender. Love's an honest thing, an' them as have

made it to be a wicked thing are black-coated devils that would starve the nature out of human life, if they could." He sees no lack of loyalty toward the faithful, austere, prematurely aging wife, after fifteen wedded years, in giving a share of his own turbulent and lawless affections to the young woman whom fate has flung secretly into his arms. The only shame and wrong would be to let the knowledge come to his wife and distress her. One day, however, the secret is betrayed, and the wife, in a jealous frenzy, strikes her husband dead. It chances that both the erring women, the murderess and her rival, escape detection; and the book becomes the history of two long and silent martyrdoms—that of the wife, longing to confess her guilt, and that of the other, who dare not openly mourn her dead. Mr. Phillpotts has written nothing since *The Children of the Mist* that compares with this volume in strength of theme and careful character drawing.

The Portreeve, which comes next in order of sequence, is, in spite of its obvious merits, not to be rashly pronounced an advance upon its author's previous works. It lacks the grim intensity of *The Secret Woman*, the lyric enthusiasm of *Children of the Mist*; but on the other hand, it has a more even strength, a greater dignity that comes from reserve force. Yet, it is like his previous books in being made from material surprisingly

simple and primitive. It tells the story of a young couple estranged on the eve of their marriage, because another man, socially beneath her, wants the girl, and another woman, socially above him, wants the man. Dodd Wolverstan has worked his way slowly up, from the workhouse to a modest competence. At thirty he is an independent farmer, holds the local and ancient honorary office of Portreeve, and has just won the promise of Ilet Yelland to marry him. But Primrose Horn, only daughter of the prosperous master of Bowden Farm, accustomed always to have what she wants, has long since determined that she wants the Portreeve, and when she learns that Abel Pierce, uncouth and unprincipled, will stop at nothing if he may win Ilet away from Wolverstan, she enters into a shameless plot with Abel to rake up an old and discredited scandal and put new life into it with a few ingenious lies. The plot works with an ease that would fail to carry conviction, if Mr. Phillpotts did not show, with his accustomed lucidity, how tradition, religious bigotry and the easy credulity of primitive minds all worked together to separate and estrange the young couple. The plot, however, succeeds only in part, and from Primrose Horn's point of view, the less important part. Convinced that her lover has driven another young woman through shame to suicide, Ilet tries to forget her chagrin, through a hasty marriage

with Abel. Wolverstan is made of sterner stuff. Although Ilet seems hopelessly lost to him, years pass before he can even bear the thought of marrying another woman, even a woman so desirable as Primrose Horn, now in the full ripeness of her beauty. But at last a day comes when the proposal she has so long awaited is trembling on his tongue, his arms are around her, his kisses on her lips, when a messenger arrives in hot haste with the news that Ilet's husband, Abel, has been crushed in the stone quarries, and has a confession to make before he dies—a confession that will betray Primrose's unsuspected treachery. The half-spoken proposal is destined never to be finished, because when next he meets Primrose, Wolverstan and Ilet are once more betrothed, and when a year has passed, they are married. Primrose Horn is the type of woman whose love when scorned turns to hate; and the second and stronger half of *The Portreeve* deals with her slow, deliberate method of revenge. Inexorable as fate, she robs him, one by one, of his farm, his cattle, his local prestige, his wife's health, his child's life, his ambition, hope and faith; until at last fate takes the guidance out of her criminal hands and her revenge recoils, with unexpected grimness, on her own head.

The Whirlwind, I am aware, has been rated very high by some critics. Mr. Howells, for instance, singles it out as his personal favorite

choice, among all of Mr. Phillpotts's writings, and does not hesitate to add the high praise that "it has all the mystic quality of Anna Karénina's dream, in which her husband and her lover are reconciled in their common possession." Nevertheless, I fail to see by what right *The Whirlwind* could be numbered among his strongest books. It is certainly not on a level with *The Children of the Mist* or *The Secret Woman*. There is less spontaneity in the character drawing; his men and his women lack something of the vital individuality of the earlier volumes; they suggest something stereotyped and worked over from earlier impressions. The central plot is not merely repellent, but difficult of acceptance. Many personages have speaking parts in the drama, but only three are intimately concerned: The Master, the Man and the Man's Wife. They are rather closer to the soil, more frankly, elementally peasant types than even Mr. Phillpotts usually gives us. In Daniel Brendon we have a splendid specimen of physical manhood, a young giant exulting in his strength, a true son of the "good red earth," slow of speech and of thought; and in Sarah Jane Friend, whom he marries, he finds a mate physically worthy of him, in spite of the fact that her father is caretaker of an abandoned peat works and that his vocation has eaten into his spirit until he lives and talks wholly in peat. Intellectually, Sarah Jane is superior,

both to her father and to her husband. She has a restless, inquiring turn of mind; she has her private doubts about many things, about religion, about social conventions, about the established order of things. Nevertheless, she is happy in her love for her husband, her daily round of duties; she will never deliberately accomplish her own unhappiness. But it happens that the Master, Woodrow by name, neurotic, selfish, doomed to a short life and aware of it, is attracted by her splendid womanhood and determines to take her for himself. His is the old, threadbare argument of Iago, that "He who is robbed, not wanting what is stolen, let him not know it, and he is not robbed at all." He sets forth the terms of the bargain to her in all its unashamed nakedness. If she consents, then all the great estate, all the splendid piece of moorland where her husband now toils as little higher than a serf, will become his own, as soon as the brief span of its present owner's life has run its course. And the woman, for the sake of her husband's material gain, consents—that is, if we can bring ourselves to accept Mr. Phillpotts's statement, a thing which is difficult to do. He should have wrought his woman of a coarser clay, a clay more closely akin to that of her own father, if he wanted us to believe that she would suffer herself to be put to so base a service. It has pleased some critics, among others, Mr.

Howells, as the above quotation implied, to read into this story a rather subtle explanation, and find excuse for the woman on the ground that she was caught in the vortex of a double passion, perplexed and tormented by having fallen, almost unconsciously, in love with two men at once. This theory is ingenious, but over-subtle. Mr. Phillpotts usually is quite capable of stating unequivocally what he means. In *Sons of the Morning* he leaves no doubt whatever that his heroine is a victim of precisely this dilemma, of loving two men at once; but Honor Endicott is a wealthy landowner, not a peasant; she is, moreover, a highstrung, introspective young person, all nerves and temperament, and separated by an immeasurable distance from the physical opulence of the Sarah Jane type. In his written words, Mr. Phillpotts implied, in *The Whirlwind*, nothing more than a physical bargain and sale—and he can usually be trusted to know his peasants.

It is a temptation to linger unduly over each separate volume; there are several which challenge attention and the relative merit of which is fairly open to dispute. There is, for instance, *The Mother of the Man*, proclaimed, not without reason, as a masterpiece of tragic motherhood, the anguish of a woman torn between mother love and an overpowering sense of duty. *The Three Brothers* is still another volume which has eager champions

among the special followers of Mr. Phillpotts; and undoubtedly they have a right to their preference among volumes where the quality is, year after year, so surprisingly well sustained. But, in a study like the present, where it is impossible to be exhaustive, the volumes to be dwelt upon are not those built upon the established formula, and so well built as to make choice difficult, but rather those—if there are any such—which show a touch of novelty, a freshness of thought or of theme. Precisely this new note is afforded by *The Beacon*, and for that reason it deserves a rather careful analysis. Although it still deals with Dartmoor folk, and is full of the quaint humor, crude philosophy and odd character drawing that he has taught his readers to expect in almost too generous proportions, its central theme strikes an unwontedly modern note. While not a suffragette novel, it deals with the modern, independent woman, the woman who believes that she has a wider mission than to perform the duties of wife and mother, that she should strive to be an inspiration to her husband and raise him to a higher standard, a broader and nobler outlook upon life. Having propounded his theme, Mr. Phillpotts does not hesitate to make quite clear his own utter disbelief in the modern attitude; and he proceeds to set forth, in intimate detail, two modern marriages that begin bright with promise and are wrecked

simply because the wives insist upon trying to remodel their husbands to suit their own ideas. With one of these marriages, that of the village innkeeper, it is not necessary to concern ourselves here. However well done, it is none the less of subordinate interest, part of the background and stage setting of the other marriage, the real central theme of the volume. Lizzie Denster is a London barmaid who, tiring of city life, secures a position at the principal tavern in a small Dartmoor village, and promptly wins the hearts of the two most desirable suitors in the neighborhood. Charles Trevail is nephew of old Abraham Trevail, owner of extensive quarries, an old miser, hot of temper and foul of tongue, and above all a woman-hater. Reynols Dunning, young Trevail's rival, and some years his senior, is a man lacking in all the outward refinements of dress and speech, the little courtesies and attentions that appeal to women; but he is a man to be depended on, a rugged, big-souled man whose joy in life would be to guard and fight for the woman he loved. Incidentally, he and old Abraham Trevail have had a lifelong feud, and the latter has been heard to vow that sooner or later he will kill his enemy. Between her two suitors Lizzie wavers. She knows that she can control Trevail; he is weak, and his obvious need of some one on whom to lean, some one to uplift him, appeals to her. Dunning, on

the other hand, she fears, because he is masterful; as his wife she never would be able to dominate him. She does not realize, Mr. Phillpotts tells us parenthetically, that of the two tasks, it is far harder to arouse a weak man than to soften and subdue a masterful one. And because she does not understand this, she makes her first big mistake and marries young Trevail. Her second and more serious error lies in trying to goad her husband into assuming a courage that he does not possess. Uncle Abraham and she quarrel violently, and a day comes when, in the heat of passion, he strikes her. From this moment, her fixed purpose in life is to bring about a breach that cannot be healed, to force her husband to make clear to his uncle that he rejects his aid during life and his money after he is dead. And because she fails to gain her point, because she is slowly forced to the conviction that Charles has again failed her, that he is constitutionally too great a coward ever to brave his uncle, she leaves him at last and goes to the house of Dunning, the masterful man, ready to remain with him if he will have her. Then follows swift tragedy. Footsteps are heard approaching. Lizzie, believing that her husband has tracked her to Dunning's home, takes refuge in an upper room and listens in dumb anguish to the faint sound of voices below. Then follow other sounds, then silence. When, after long suspense, she ventures

to creep down, she finds Dunning alone, stretched upon the floor, with his head crushed in by a blow dealt from behind. The rest of the volume deals with the mystery of this murder, the way in which suspicion fastens upon Charles, and the fixed conviction of Lizzie that the real murderer is Uncle Abraham, and that if she persists she will at last force his stubborn nature to the point of confession. Eventually, the woman attains her object, and saves her husband; but what Mr. Phillpotts makes clear beyond all question is that, even after she has done all this, the two cannot come together again—that the union of the masterful woman and the weak husband is fundamentally wrong, and no amount of patching up will remedy it.

Here, with this book, which two years ago sounded a new note of promise, it is well to take leave of Mr. Phillpotts. The subsequent volumes, while they might afford congenial material for a paragraph or more of comment that would be neither eulogy nor reproach, neither add nor subtract anything of importance from an estimate of him as a whole. Mr. Phillpotts is not, to-day, a vital force in the new fiction. He is a curious blending of British tradition and of the realistic movement of quarter of a century ago. His faults are the faults of a big and lasting tradition—the faults for which modern apologists are ever revert-

ing to Fielding and Smollett and Scott, to Dickens and Thackeray, for precedent and justification. In construction lies his great weakness; his cardinal sins are a rambling looseness, an exasperating tendency to digress and allow subordinate characters to usurp the center of the stage at their own sweet will; and, least pardonable of all, to shirk his task, not once but over and over again, and dodge the solution of some problem concerning an immortal soul, by letting a foot stumble or a finger slip, and precipitating a human carcass down a sheer five hundred feet on to Dartmoor granite. On the other hand, Mr. Phillpotts has a few qualities that are admittedly rare in the school of younger writers, any one of whom could give him valuable points on the art of construction. He has an amazing keenness of vision; nothing in physical life, not the quiver of a leaf nor the glint of a ray of light escapes him. And he has something more important than this; he has, developed to a rare extent, that invaluable quality—I was almost on the point of calling it the hall-mark—of a good realist, namely, the gift of being absolutely objective. And in this connection it is interesting to quote briefly from a letter written by Mr. Phillpotts himself and published not so very long ago in the *Bookman*:

Serious modern novelists are engaged upon this high business and have no time to think about them-

selves, or air their predilections, hobbies or opinions. The men who paraded themselves, consciously and unconsciously, were actuated by the old values, held in check by religion, morality and a thousand other conventional restrictions; but we feel that all these things are only so many bars and hindrances to that pure, scientific curiosity whose goal is the stark truth of human nature. An absolutely impersonal attitude is what we seek. A good surgeon in the midst of a life or death operation has no time to demonstrate or advertise. And we, who try to make live men and women—for novel writing is a life or death operation too—are similarly far too concerned with the enormous difficulties to intrude our own personalities or play showman.

It is this absolutely impersonal attitude which constitutes Mr. Phillpotts's chief claim to recognition in contemporary fiction. In certain other respects, he is out of the current movement. English and American fiction both owe a debt to the best of the French realists somewhat beyond Mr. Phillpotts's personal debt to them, and the result is that the net impression left by his works is that of a relatively greater diffuseness, a lack of the ruthless pruning of the Continental school, the insistence on perfect form. None the less, Mr. Phillpotts takes a high rank for his deep interest and profound understanding of human nature and his reverence for absolute truth to life.

RUDYARD KIPLING

THIS is not an auspicious time for adding to the already over-abundant accumulation of critical studies of Rudyard Kipling. On the one hand, it is still too early to sum him up with an assured finality; and on the other, although we may still hope that he has many a surprise yet in store, many a unique product of his mature powers, the fact remains that the day when one was compelled to write of him exuberantly, in the sheer joy of speculating on what his erratic and undisciplined genius would do next, is a thing of the past. Consequently, a chapter on Mr. Kipling at this time and place has just one excuse; that he is too imposing a figure among contemporary English story tellers to be omitted; his inclusion will be taken for granted. Yet, beyond some minor readjustments, beyond attempting to point out a safe mid-channel between the relative claims of the earlier and the later Kipling, there is really very little that is new to say about an author who has intrenched himself in the hearts of the Anglo-Saxon world more widely and more solidly than any other writer since Dickens—who, more than



RUDYARD KIPLING

any other, has enriched the language of the people with words and phrases that have become part of our verbal medium of exchange, the legal tender of our current speech.

A great deal has been idly written about the "Decline of Kipling," about "Kipling at the Crossroads," about the contrast between the old Kipling and the new. The plain truth is that, excepting for a widened horizon, an awakened understanding, the author of *Traffics and Discoveries* and of *Rewards and Fairies* is the same old Kipling of *Soldiers Three* and *Barrack-Room Ballads*, and that he is so because he has always been the new Kipling, always doing the strange and unexpected, always refusing to be definitely labeled as the story teller of India, the self-appointed laureate of Tommy Atkins, the Anglo-Saxon Aesop. There are some geniuses too big to run smoothly in a beaten track. That Mr. Kipling has grown and broadened with the passage of years needs no argument. To take the measure of that growth, one has only to compare any one of the *Departmental Ditties* with such a poem as "The Truce of the Bear," or "The White Man's Burden."

It follows, quite naturally, that critics of the academic sort feel driven to explain the source of Mr. Kipling's wide appeal, to analyze his works and prove by the careful logic of a proposition from Euclid, wherein his greatness lies. They try

to show that in his earliest as well as in his latest writings we already have a man of fully developed purpose, self-appointed spokesman of the Anglo-Saxon race, champion of Imperialism, discipline, law and order. Now, it is quite true that you can go back as far as you please in Mr. Kipling's writings, back even to those fugitive and inconsequential pieces collected in *Abaft the Funnel*, and find in them many a germ idea which was destined later to bear big fruit. But this you can do with almost any man of Kipling's mental stature. To take a single example, Zola's *Lettres de Jeunesse* show in embryo almost every one of the ideas that later became with him articles of faith, corner-stones of his biggest achievements. But to claim that Zola, as a raw collegian, had already fully mapped out his *Quatre Évangiles* or that the author of *The Rescue of Pluffles* had already formulated his philosophy of life, is to utter nonsense. Among the products of Mr. Kipling's mature powers is a story which has with justice been much admired, *The Ship That Found Herself*. It narrates, you will remember, the first trans-Atlantic voyage of the new ship *Dimbula*, and tells how from the weighing of the anchor and the first turn of the screw there began a clamor, an insistent babel of voices, a discord of each and every part of the ship, airing their grievances, blaming their neighbors, the rivets complaining to the plates, the

shaft denouncing the propeller, one and all consumed by an over-weening egotism. And then, finally, one day a new, deep voice booms out calmly but commandingly, "What is all this noise about?" And when the thousand plates and rivets, planks and beams wonderingly chorus the question, "Who are you?" the answer comes, "Why, I am the ship *Dimbula*, of course, and I have never been anything else, only I didn't quite know it—that, and a good deal of a fool." Now, this story is usually interpreted, and justly, as an inimitable allegory of the awakening of civic consciousness in a community, the realization of organized strength. Yet it is equally legitimate to apply it to an individual instead of a mob—even to apply it to Mr. Kipling himself. From the beginning, certain of his pet hobbies and aversions had been insistently crying out in everything that he wrote, vociferously clamoring to be heard, drowning each other, working at cross purposes, not yet conscious that, taken together, they made up a rather remarkable personality. And then, all of a sudden, Mr. Kipling seems one day to have awakened, stretched himself and announced in calm surprise, "Why, I am Rudyard Kipling, of course, and I never have been anything else—only I was not precisely aware of it."

This way of looking at Mr. Kipling was forced upon me recently as the result of having tried the

experiment of rereading in wholesale quantities all of his earlier volumes, *Under the Deodars*, *Mine Own People*, *The Phantom Rickshaw*—renewing acquaintance with a large majority of these stories after an interval of nearly a score of years. The old glamour was still there, yet what impressed me chiefly in thus going back to them was a lack of unity, an absence of any common purpose, a suggestion of experiments in a hundred different directions, as of a man groping for his path. The truth is that Mr. Kipling was cursed with a precocious talent, a marvelous facility which would have been disastrous to a writer of smaller caliber. Fate had played into his hands by giving him an exotic setting of unrivaled brilliance, an opportunity for pyrotechnic bursts of verbal color, through which we glimpse strange dramas and the clash of alien races. He had, however, the natural instinct of the story teller. He grew up in a land where this instinct is bred in the bone, and where many of the oldest tales of the world, which have since migrated to every civilized country, were first slowly wrought into shape, gathering perfection as they were passed down by word of mouth through uncounted generations. How much of this native gift of story-telling Mr. Kipling may have unconsciously assimilated in boyhood it would be interesting to know; at least, there is much of the same laborious process of endless polishing

shown in the *Jungle Books* and the *Just-So Stories*. But in his early years he did not always take time to shape his stories; they impress one, many of them, as having largely written themselves. He was often content to tell his stories in the first person, not coming in directly as a participator, but merely as a witness, recording certain events glimpsed in passing, things which happened, in a certain way, not because it was inevitable that they should have happened that way, but just because they did so happen. Now, the bigger type of story, the type which Mr. Kipling himself has given us in abundance in his riper years, is that which leaves the conviction that it was inevitable, that it had to happen in a certain way, because the people in it had such-and-such natures and were therefore foreordained to act precisely so. In his earlier stories he was inordinately fond of invoking Fate to cut short a tangle, thus begging the main question, but securing a touch of sensational horror. Thus, in *The Tertium Quid*, a prospective elopement is cut short, not by any deliberate action on the part of the man and woman involved, but by a catastrophe due to the breaking away of a rain-washed embankment; and the man makes no answer to the woman's despairing cry, because he is lying underneath his horse, nine hundred feet below the cliff, "spoiling a patch of Indian corn." And again, even in the fine artistry of

Without Benefit of Clergy, we realize, that, as a protest against racial intermarriage, the argument is weakened by the form of death both of mother and of child—because it is impossible to hold the mixed marriage responsible for the fact that an epidemic of fever and of cholera happen to choose this particular woman and child among the victims.

Perfect self-assurance sometimes covers a multitude of sins; and the assurance of Mr. Kipling in those earlier days was nothing if not perfect. He consistently assumed a studied pose, the pose of the man for whom life contains no surprises, the weary cynic who is quite sure that he knows precisely what is wrong with the world and smiles with the infinite superiority of vast experience over the follies of potentates and of governments. He was still separated by half a lifetime from the mature Kipling who has learned to express a deeper wisdom in stories fitted to the understanding of little children. He had not quite yet outgrown that bumptiousness of youth which thinks to prove itself manly by professing a scorn of young women. It is this feature, among others, no doubt, which was so keenly felt by Henry James when he wrote with one of his inimitable flashes of comparison that Mr. Kipling's "extreme youth is indeed what I may call his window-bar—the support on which he somewhat rowdily leans while he

looks down at the human scene with his pipe in his teeth."

Yet, with all their shortcomings, their audacious disregard of technique, which has made the "splendid carelessness" of Mr. Kipling a favorite phrase for critics to conjure with, those stories caught the imagination of the public with a swiftness and a permanance almost without parallel. People did not realize that even while they were reading the rapid output of American and English reprints of earlier Indian volumes, the author had already, in a measure, outgrown the mood that begot them, that his eye was opening upon a wider horizon. In literature as well as in life, no man can serve two masters—no man with Kipling's rugged sincerity and sledge-hammer earnestness can keep one creed of politics, morals and religion for his verse, and another for his prose. It has never been adequately pointed out how closely the dominant moods of Kipling's poems at any epoch have found an echo in his other writings. "Mandalay," for instance, you will find already blocked out in the rough in *Letters from the East*, down to the Burmah girl, and the cheroot, and the hathis piling teak. "The Truce of the Bear" was the product of the same mind that was brooding in *Kim* over the "great game" of strategy played in India against the standing menace to the northern frontier. And the Kip-

ling of later years, absorbed in dreams of Anglo-Saxon supremacy and voicing in dynamic verse the pent-up popular opinions of a nation, could not, if he would, keep these thoughts out of the short stories which comprise his volume of *Traffics and Discoveries*. That is why a reader, here and there, who is not interested in the destinies of England, or the shortcomings of her army and navy, or the ethics of her struggle with the Boers, but who did care very much for the picturesqueness of Kipling's India, with its palm trees and its sunshine and its dearth of the Ten Commandments, not unnaturally lays down such a volume as *Traffics and Discoveries* with a keen sense of disillusion.

Nevertheless, when, in the fullness of time, the life-work of Rudyard Kipling comes to be weighed in the balance in its entirety, it is safe to predict that the volumes which will necessarily receive a detailed consideration, will not be *Soldiers Three* nor *Plain Tales from the Hills* nor *Barrack-Room Ballads*; they will be, if one may venture upon what Mr. James calls the luxury of prophesying—the *Jungle Books*, as a unique childhood classic, *Kim*, as the author's highest attainment in fiction, and *The Five Nations*, as an apotheosis of Anglo-Saxon supremacy and a most interesting human document into the bargain. Even in an article on Mr. Kipling as a story teller, it is im-

possible to pass these poems over in silence, for they form the key to so much of his later prose. They stand as a sort of personal creed, a confession of faith in the British Empire. Mr. Kipling has an unfaltering belief in the divine right of the Anglo-Saxon to inherit the earth, and in this spirit he dedicated these poems to the "Five Free Nations," the mother Island and the Colonies that already encircle the globe. Probably no other poet has so curiously blended the spirit of Imperialism with such genuine democracy. It is not merely the prerogative of the Anglo-Saxon—The White Man *par excellence*—to overrun the four quarters of the globe, sword in hand—it is his duty, the "White Man's Burden," to conquer and civilize perforce "the new-court, sullen peoples, half-devil and half-child." No poet of Homeric days ever sang the glories of war with more whole-souled enthusiasm. The soldier's life is "the lordliest life on earth," and when he writes of it, if only in a "Service Song," his very meter takes on a martial spirit; one hears, behind and through the words, the sound of bugle calls, the tramp, tramp, tramp of many men, the dominant note of fife and drum that set the reader's blood tingling and his feet to beating time with contagious enthusiasm as he reads.

Peace, Mr. Kipling teaches, is to be had only at the price of war; army and navy are the bulwarks

that the forefathers reared for England's protection, like the dikes that the Hollanders reared to keep out the sea—they can be maintained only at the price of eternal vigilance:

Now we can only wait till the day, wait and apportion
our shame!

These are the dikes our fathers left, but we would
not look at the same.

Time and again were we warned of the dikes, time
and again we delayed;

Now, it may fall, we have slain our sons, as our
fathers we have betrayed.

And again, in "The Islanders,"—that scathing
and it may be intemperate indictment of "flannelled fools" and "muddied oafs,"—he reiterates
this same idea of neglected duty and trust betrayed. Civilization, he insists,

. . . was not made with the mountains, it is not one
with the deep,

Men, not gods, devised it, Men, not gods, must keep,
Men, not children, not servants, or kinsfolk called
from afar,

But each man born in the island broke to the matter
of war.

Yet, for all his imperialism, for all that he is the
self-constituted laureate of "The Five Free Nations that are peers among their peers,"—that he
hails the Commonwealth of Australia as the Young

Queen, and Canada as Our Lady of the Snows—he is nevertheless at heart the poet of the barrack-room still, in the best sense of the term—the poet who sings the praises of the rank and file, in the armies of peace as well as in the armies of war. In the old days, it was “not a Duke nor Earl nor yet a Viscount,” whom he chose to sing; it was plain Mr. Thomas Atkins. And still to-day, in poems like “Pharaoh and the Serjeant,” it is not the “big, brass general,” it is the neglected and forgotten sergeant, “the man in khaki kit who can handle men a bit, with his bedding labeled Sergeant Whatsisname.” From first to last, Mr. Kipling has shown unmeasured scorn for bureaucracy, the red tape of officialdom, the tinsel glitter of empty titles. There is nothing more eminently healthy in all his writings than the admirable sanity, the unmistakable earnestness with which he recognizes honest work, “the simple, sheer, sufficing, sane result of labor spent,” and gives credit where it belongs, to

. . . the men who merely do the work
For which they draw the wage,—
Men like to gods that do the work
For which they draw the wage.

There are other poems which do not need to be separately proclaimed—poems like “The Truce of the Bear,” “The Islanders,” “The Lesson”—

poems that are bound to be read and remembered as long as the events that they commemorate, because they are not poems alone, but political pamphlets in verse, audacious indictments of existing conditions, that passed from lip to lip with the speed of wings and refused to be forgotten. In spite of his verbal audacities, Mr. Kipling has at heart always been something of an epicure in his use of words. He appreciates, to a nicety, their ultimate shade of meaning, he knows how to wring from them their uttermost force and energy. Rugged strength was what he wanted first of all in these poems of big, vital, ethical problems—and he obtained it with a simplicity of word and phrase that one must marvel at while one reads. Not that his later verse is altogether lacking in his old-time verbal daring. Such a poem as "The Sea and the Hills" is full of curious alliterations, words forced into strange and unexpected partnerships, sonorous syllables following one another with a rush and tumble and cumulative force of many waves:

Who hath desired the Sea? The sight of salt water
unbounded—

The heave and the salt and the hurl and the crash
of the comber wind-hounded?

But for the most part the effective lines of the later poems, the lines which linger and echo in the

memory are simple Anglo-Saxon lines, monosyllabic, almost prose. Some of them have already passed into circulation, been added to the current coin of English speech. Whatever may be thought of the wisdom or the justice of such poems as "The Lesson" or "The Islanders," there can be nothing but admiration for the splendid audacity which inspired them.

Just as it is impossible to read "The Truce of the Bear" without thinking of *Kim*, in the same way it is impossible to consider *Kim* apart from its relation to the *Jungle Books*; for these two books are bound together by such a logical sequence that it is strange so little emphasis has even yet been laid upon their obvious relation to each other. Like his own British soldier in "Mandalay," Mr. Kipling obviously felt, for many years, a lingering nostalgia for the Orient: "If you've 'eard the East a-callin', why, you won't 'eed nothin' else." He industriously tried to heed other things, the fishing banks of Newfoundland, the school-boy life in England, the veldt and kopje of South Africa. Yet all the while he was plainly haunted by a persistent, yet elusive desire to write a book, a big book, embodying the life of India as a whole, with all its wonderful maze of conflicting beliefs and superstitions and races and castes.

Every reader of *Plain Tales from the Hills* must remember Wressley of the Foreign Office,

poor Wressley who wrote a book on India, with his heart and soul at the end of his pen, catching and analyzing Rajahs, and "tracing them up into the mists of Time and Beyond," for ten hours a day, and in the end his book was a Book, because he had put into it not only his vast special knowledge, but, "a spirit, a poetry, an inwoven human touch which are beyond all special knowledge." Wressley did all this for the sake of "one frivolous little girl," Tillie Venner. Do you happen to remember her summing up of the book? "Oh, your book? It's all about those howwid wajahs. I didn't understand it."

Now, when at last it came Mr. Kipling's turn to write another book on India, it also proved to be "a book which is a Book." It was written, if ever any book was, with heart and soul and mind at the end of his pen, and inspired with that all-seeing comprehension that makes its pages luminous; and no sooner had it appeared than a certain class of critics, like so many Tillie Venners, began to say, under varied forms and twists of phrase, "Oh, your book? It's all about rajahs, and babus, and lamas, and we can't understand it." But here the analogy ceases, for Tillie Venner not only hurt Wressley, but was the moral death of him; while no amount of unfair criticism stayed Mr. Kipling in his chosen course nor lessened the worth of what is still his finest achievement.

The central thought which was destined eventually to beget *Kim* seems to have taken shape slowly, and to have deterred, perhaps even overawed Mr. Kipling, by its magnitude. It seemed at first too big ever to be embodied in a picture of real life, and accordingly his first attempts at interpreting it took the form of fable, just as the Hindoos themselves, centuries ago, chose to embody their wisdom in the beast tales of the *Hitopadeśa* or the *Katasaritsagara*. To those who read beneath the lines, the *Jungle Books* are far more than a new childhood classic. They are the life of modern India, told in allegory, and in *Ka* and *Bagheera* and all the rest we have the types of native life, with its stored-up wisdom of old, primeval instincts, its childlike simplicity of outlook upon the present-day world. The same conception which gave us the *Jungle Books* took final shape in *Kim*, and to those who enjoy such literary analysis I suggest the task of following out the analogy between the animal personages in the former and the chief actors in the latter book.

It is quite likely that *Kim*, this story of the Little Friend of All the World, is not destined ever to be popular in the broad sense in which *Without Benefit of Clergy* and *The Man Who Would Be King* are popular. It is too especial, too profound, too esoteric. But those to whom it appeals and who have come under its spell find

some difficulty in speaking of it temperately. There can be no question that India is there in its pages—the whole of India as it is to-day, with all its numberless and intricate substrata of mixed faiths and languages and races, reaching back through the uncounted years to the time when those first and unknown Aryan pioneers pushed their ways southward through the mountain passes to find a resting place beside the waters of the upper Indus. There is something of epic bigness in the book, the comprehensiveness of view that makes the petty things of life so small and yet throws those minute details which really count into such luminous relief. The India of Kipling is so manifold that it is not easy to grasp. There is the superficial Anglo-Indian side, with its social functions and its Mrs. Hauksbees, and its “Rescues of Pluffles,” and the like; there is the obvious native life, with its sunshine and its palm trees and its tinkly temple bells—the side to which the Ortherises and the Mulvaneyns get a good deal nearer than all the Mrs. Hauksbees and Captain Gadsbys ever do. Back of this, layer upon layer, extends the personal, intimate, unrevealed life of the Hindoo, the result of untold generations, the sum total of instincts and traditions and stored-up wisdom of past ages, the purport of which the average Occidental mind can scarcely fathom. And lastly, there is that stirring, vital side, the

secret conflict between East and West now going on silently but surely—the Great Game, as Mr. Kipling calls it—the game that is being played night and day by the Anglo-Saxon secret service, which stretches in a vast reticulation, like a gigantic checkerboard, throughout the length and breadth of the peninsula.

The way in which Mr. Kipling has chosen to set this vast, complex picture before us is little less than a stroke of genius. It was too big to be given in its entirety; so he has shown only a fragment, a cross-section, as it were, seen through the eyes of a boy, a poor little waif called Kim. It has pleased some reviewers to compare Kim with the little drummer boys in *The Drums of the Fore-and-Aft*. Personally, I fail to see the resemblance. Kim is, in spirit, a foster-brother of Mowgli, a sort of missing link between the primitiveness of the East and the civilization of the West. He is the son of a certain Kimball O'Hara, one time Color Sergeant of the Irish regiment known as the Mavericks, who had married a nurse-maid in his colonel's family, and after her death had gone the pace and met the end of many another broken-down white man in India. Kim had been adopted by a half-caste woman in the bazaar of Lahore. He had grown up, not merely *à la grace de Dieu*, but under co-operative protection of several hundred native gods, to all of whom he extended

polite recognition, without standing in awe of any of them. Kim's father had left papers which would have gained him protection either from the regiment, or from the Jadrogher or local masonic lodge; but instead of using them, Kim wore these papers in a leather amulet case around his neck, and "carefully avoided missionaries and white men of serious aspect, who asked who he was and what he did." The whole story, to put it briefly, deals with the manner in which this small boy of no apparent account, who has the training of the Oriental grafted upon the intelligence of the West, is gradually prepared to become one of the cog-wheels in that complicated mechanism which goes to make up the Great Game. Of the details of the story and the motley crowd of personages that take part in it, this is hardly the place to speak. They are figures which, taken out of their setting, are unintelligible to the Western mind. Indeed, the danger is that the best of them, even the old Thibetan Lama, will not be understood beyond a certain point. This venerable figure, from his far-off lamasery in the mountains of Thibet, who has come on his hopeless quest in search of a sacred river, the river that gushed forth where Buddha's arrow once fell, is a combination of stored-up wisdom and child-like simplicity that is likely to be wholly misunderstood by many a Western reader. There is something about his vener-

able dignity that is reminiscent of certain passages in *King Lear*. But one might go on indefinitely speculating about the significance of this book and of its separate characters. There can be no doubt that as a whole it symbolizes the gulf which separates Orient and Occident.

To discuss in detail any other volume by Mr. Kipling, after *Kim*, would be to indulge in an anticlimax. There are some who find a special merit in the mysticism of stories like *Wireless* and *They*; there are others who exalt *Puck of Pook's Hill* to the position of his crowning achievement—a position which, if books could be supposed to have feelings, would sadly embarrass it to live up to. But if we forget for a moment the question of relative greatness, and speak only of individual preferences, then there are a score of titles that clamor for a passing word. Personally, without being blind to its numerous shortcomings, I must confess that *The Story of the Gadsbys* is even yet numbered among my minor literary vices. It is crude, it is very young, yet it has its big moments—that, for instance, in “The Tents of Kedar,” where Mrs. Herriott drops her light tone and says tensely, “My God, Pip! I was a good woman once.” Mr. Kipling must have shaken hands with himself when he wrote that line. The Mulvaney stories contain probably a large percentage of the best of his early stories; it is my own loss that,

with the exception of *The Courting of Dinah Shadd*, they leave me cold. *The Mark of the Beast* and *At the End of the Passage* miss their goal, like a spiritual séance after you know the trick—but the atmosphere of the second of these stories, with its heat and loneliness, of the kind that drives one mad, is brutally real—it can hardly be read without a sense of suffocation, and the burn of prickly heat breaking out all over one. On the other hand, *Beyond the Pale*, *On the City Wall*, *Without Benefit of Clergy*, are among the great short stories of the world. They bear the test of uncounted re-readings, they wear well.

And side by side with them belong certain stories of his mature period; stories of widely different substance, the product of different influences, yet refusing to be ignored, even in the hastiest summary of his works. In this choice I find myself passing over the stories which, in popular estimation, are his most characteristic, the stories born of his ability to see the poetry of mechanical power. Undoubtedly, he has accomplished more than one striking *tour de force* in this direction: he stands alone in his ability to see the drama latent in the motor car, the railway engine, the rapid fire of modern armament. The red glow of a furnace, the wild gyrations of a broken piston rod, are to him as much a part of the vital, tingling life of to-day as the flush on a woman's cheek or the

contortions of a man in his death agony. Through most of his later stories he makes us hear the throb of machinery, the hiss of escaping steam, the mighty drone of huge propellers ; and, as a symbol of the encroachment of materialism, our old friends, the immortal Soldiers Three, give place to one Pyecroft, a naval machinist, who weighs and measures life in the language of the engine room.

Many of these stories are curiosities of the passing hour. But there are others, in which mechanics play little or no part, that have a far better right, and better chance to live. There is, for instance, a unique little bit of dialogue, *Below the Milldam*, written somewhat in the mood of the *Jungle Books*. Surely there is no other living writer to whom it would have occurred to write a pungent satire upon English conservatism and the encroachment of modern thought, in the form of a discussion between a Gray Cat, a Black Rat and an ancient Mill Wheel, that creakingly drones out whole pages of the Doomsday Book as it monotonously grinds forth its daily task. Then there is *An Habitation Enforced*, written in a manner reminiscent of Henry James, telling how a young American couple who have gone abroad, seeking for a quiet spot where the husband may heal his shattered nerves and escape for the time from the killing drive of American business, temporarily

rent a beautiful old English estate, and little by little find themselves taken possession of by the place, by its traditions, by its delicious yet intangible charm. It is a story which shows more plainly than any other the distance that Mr. Kipling has traveled since he wrote *The Story of the Gadsbys*—it is the difference between youth's scorn of marriage and of the safe prosperity of country life, and the wisdom of middle age, that sees the tranquil beauty of domesticity, the mellow charm of an English landscape.

There is just one more story that refuses to be passed over, for it has the double appeal of faultless technique and a haunting personality—*Mrs. Bathurst*. A great deal has been said about the incomprehensibility of this story, its downright opacity. There are people of average intelligence who will assure you that after reading it twice and even three times, they can make nothing at all out of it. As a matter of fact, there is nothing obscure about what Mr. Kipling has seen fit to tell us—only, as often happens in real life, we are not privileged to hear more than a few disjointed, random facts—"the rest is silence." What we do hear is that Vickerey, a warrant officer, with a wife living in England, met a certain Mrs. Bathurst, attractive and popular keeper of a public bar in Auckland, much frequented by naval men. What there was between Vickerey and Mrs. Bath-

urst, we are not told, but it is implied that "there must have been a good deal." At all events, Vickerey leaves her, not knowing, we infer, the real extent of her interest in him—perhaps, also, doggedly determined to do his duty by the wife in England. Then later, when his duties have taken him to South Africa, he idly drifts, one day when he has shore leave, into a cinematograph show; and among the pictures is one showing a London railway station, a train pulling in, coming to a stop, the doors of the compartments opening, and then suddenly, beyond the shadow of a merciful doubt, Mrs. Bathurst stepping out, and coming down the platform, looking straight ahead of her, with the unforgotten "blindish look in her eyes." What Vickerey feels is not recorded; but just at this time he has news that his wife is dead, and we conclude that, whether right or wrong in his belief, Vickerey believes that Mrs. Bathurst has followed him to London, is perhaps even now on her way to the Cape. Day after day, so long as it remains in town, Vickerey haunts the cinematograph, waiting dumbly, blindly, for the few brief seconds when he may once more see Mrs. Bathurst come down the platform, with the "blindish look in her eyes." In the belief of his friends he is temporarily out of his mind, and his Captain apparently concurs in this verdict; for after an official interview, which is one of the things we are not

permitted to overhear, he sends Vickerey up country, to recuperate; then comes the news that Vickerey has deserted, and mystery for the time being swallows him up. Then, at the end, another broken fragment of grisly import; far up the line of rails running northward through newly opened country, a lightning-seared tree, and beneath it two charred forms, literally human charcoal, the one still upright, looking down on "his mate." And some false teeth, and a few tattooed letters, standing out whitish against the black, complete the identification. Now, the whole strength of this story lies in the method of its telling. You hear it from the lips of stolid, callous naval men, rude of speech, coarse in their views of life in general and of women in particular. And through the medium of their very coarseness, their picturesque vulgarity, their lack of finer perceptions, you get an impression of a tragic drama which no amount of finer methods could have given. In its suggestion of vague, unspeakable things, lying behind the written words, lengthening vistas where the imagination may stray and lose itself, it stands as an exceptional *tour de force*, one of those few stories that you cannot forget, even if you would.

It is because he can thus work magic with words, because he has an unmatched genius for taking life as a whole, with all its crudeness, its sordidness, its

materialism, and weaving it into pictures of haunting mystery and romance, that Mr. Kipling holds among story tellers of to-day a prestige which shall not soon be taken from him. But behind the craft of the story teller, beyond the lure of the unfolded tale, lies the potency of a personality, the dynamic force of a mind that, right or wrong, has an unshaken confidence in its own philosophy of life.

WILLIAM JOHN LOCKE

ON the question of popular judgment in art and letters, Mr. Ruskin uttered very nearly the ultimate word when he pointed out the illogic of expecting the opinions of a crowd to be correct, when the opinions of any individual in that crowd were more than likely to be wrong. Black is not made white by calling it so, and the mere fact that a mob of a thousand are simultaneously shouting their mistake does not make it one shade the whiter than a single voice would do. It follows that, when an author of real artistic worth and delicacy of style, after being consistently neglected by the general public, suddenly receives the popular vote, it is the part of wisdom to scrutinize his later work with more than usual care and question seriously whether he has not sacrificed some of his ideals. A case in point is afforded by Mr. William J. Locke, author of *The Morals of Marcus Ordeyne* and *The Belovèd Vagabond*, also—and there is a sense of anti-climax in naming them—of *Septimus* and *Simon the Jester*.

Let us ask briefly just what Mr. Locke stands for in contemporary fiction, and what his own at-



WILLIAM JOHN LOCKE

titude is toward the craft of story-telling. To any one asking these questions a few years ago, the answer would have been that Mr. Locke did not consider himself primarily a man of letters; that he was, on the contrary, known to the world chiefly through his chosen profession of architecture, and more especially through his post of honor as Secretary of the Royal Institute of British Architects; and that his novel-writing was mainly a relaxation, an avenue of escape from the daily routine, a method of enjoying indirectly a certain blithe and irresponsible Bohemianism. But as a matter of fact, no great number of people were asking these questions a few years ago; there was no urgency on the part of the general public to acquire information concerning Mr. Locke's personality or literary methods; one could search the index of periodical literature in vain for any special articles devoted to him. In England he had a small but slowly augmenting circle of readers. In America he had practically no following at all, and the reviews which greeted each successive book, while often cordially recognizing their peculiar quality, were apt to refer to him vaguely as "a certain W. J. Locke," as though his name awakened no chord of memory in the reviewer's mind. But presently a number of little things happened, the cumulative force of which must have caused considerable surprise to a per-

son of so retiring a disposition as Mr. Locke. In the first place, the experiment of building a play from the *Morals of Marcus* resulted in a very big London success, in spite of the fact that at the time there was a feud between the actor-manager, Mr. Arthur Bouchier, and the dramatic critics, in consequence of which the play was practically ignored by the daily press. Then came the American production of *Marcus*, followed by the dramatization of what is easily Mr. Locke's best work, *The Belovèd Vagabond*; then the sudden awakening of the general public to the fact that he was an author about whom they ought to know something; and finally the serialization of Mr. Locke's next novel, *Septimus*, in a popular magazine of big circulation. That was, of course, an immense difference between the modest *succès d'estime* of former years and the new flamboyant heralding with its award of crowded houses and a place among the Six Best Selling Books. And because all this is calculated to confuse one's sense of relative values, it seems worth while to try to forget, for the moment, these misleading factors of popular success and to ask calmly and judicially what *Septimus* really stands for in the literary development of Mr. Locke and how the workmanship of his later volumes compares with that of his earlier.

There is, on the surface of it, something para-

doxical in the contrast between the quiet correctness of the author's personality and the riotous unconventionality of his themes. Among the many utterances of Sir Marcus which one suspects to be the embodiment of Mr. Locke's own views, his private philosophy of life, is the following suggestive passage, which offers a key to the puzzle:

Hasn't a phase of the duality of our nature ever struck you? We have a primary or everyday nature—a thing of habit, tradition, circumstance; and we also have a secondary nature which clamors for various sensations and is quite contented with vicarious gratification. There are delicately fibered novelists who satisfy a sort of secondary Berserkism by writing books whose pages reek with bloodshed. The most placid, benevolent, gold-spectacled paterfamilias I know, a man who thinks it cruel to eat live oysters, has a curious passion for crime and gratifies it by turning his study into a *musée macabre* of murderers' relics. In the same way predestined spinsters obtain vicarious enjoyment of the tender passion by reading highly colored love-stories.

There in a nutshell we have the secret source of the delightful unconventionality of Mr. Locke's stories, the charm of irresponsible Bohemianism with which they were permeated. This quiet, correct gentleman of forty-nine years—he was born in the Barbados, March 20, 1863—this graduate

of St. John's College, Cambridge, with special honors in mathematics; this dignified Secretary of the Royal Institute of British Architects, has a secondary nature which craves the varied sensation of the *Vie de Bohème*, and gratifies it vicariously in his leisure hours by writing the annals of more than one lovable and philosophic vagabond. As has already been intimated, there are no English writers with whom Mr. Locke is closely related, in style, mood or subject-matter. He is quite *sui generis*, an unimitative as he is inimitable. A rebellious vein of romanticism, a love of the quixotic, a tender chivalry, an indulgent irony: these are some of the qualities possessed by his most characteristic volumes. His deliciously irresponsible vagaries, his whimsical tenderness, his audacious disregard of the conventions of story-writing, and not less than these his undeniable quality of style entitle him to be recognized as one of that small group who have a chance to outlive that great host of ephemeral novelists who write for the day and hour. He is not a master of fiction in the sense in which we think of Maupassant and Meredith and Henry James—masters equally of technique and of the truth of life. Mr. Locke's mastery is of an entirely different sort. His power lies almost wholly in the personal equation, the whimsical, extravagant, ironical conceptions that he flings before us often in defiance of com-

mon sense and the laws of probability—now and then almost crossing the border-line of caricature, and yet kept curiously real by the very genuine and whole-hearted understanding of human nature that lies behind them. In the feeblest passages of his earlier works, his romanticism sometimes betrayed him into lapses to which an unkind critic might suggest a parallel from Ouida. In the best pages of *Marcus Ordeyne* and *The Belovèd Vagabond* there is an intangible charm which finds its kinship in French literature, rather than in English—that typically Gallic vein of satire and humor which in one epoch and environment produced a Henry Murger, and in another an Anatole France. Mr. Locke could never have created a Sylvestre Bonnard or a M. Bergerat, but he might have embodied their philosophy, their erudition, their love of letters in some one of the patient and courageous denizens of that bohemia which he haunts by proxy and which Murger himself once defined as “the antechamber to the Academy, the hospital or the morgue.”

With the appearance of *The Belovèd Vagabond*, Mr. Locke rounded out his first ten volumes; and, while these show a fairly steady advance in constructive ability, it may be said without fear of contradiction, that if measured by his plots alone, Mr. Locke would always be rated very much below his real worth. It is curious to see, in his

earlier volumes, what a mistaken importance he attached to plot, how he tortured the law of probabilities and racked his imagination for startling and unheard-of situations. As a matter of fact, the plot is the part for which the sympathetic reader cares least in Mr. Locke's books. What ultimately happens to his characters is a minor consideration; what they think and say and do from day to day makes up the vital interest. And one suspects that it is the same with Mr. Locke himself as with his readers; he loves his characters less for what they achieve than for what they are. He no longer troubles himself to seek for great variety in plot. Like Marcel's famous painting of "The Passage of the Red Sea," in *La Vie de Bohème*, which underwent an annual metamorphosis into "The Passage of the Rubicon," "The Passage of the Bersina," and finally "The Port of Marseilles," the ground plans of several of Mr. Locke's books prove to be clever variations on one and the same air. You know the typical Ouida plot, the mistaken generosity that makes a man give up a title, a fortune and the woman he loves, take upon himself the crime of another, and disappear from the world that knew him into a life of vagabondage and obscurity. Worked out with Ouida's riotous melodrama, her ignorance of life, her false ideals, we have *Pascarel* and *Under Two Flags*. Substitute for her deficiencies a rare

sense of humor, a delicious philosophy of life, a command of irony as dexterous as the rapier play of a practised swordsman, and you get the measure that separates William John Locke from Ouida. His heroes are often purposely, extravagantly, incredibly quixotic. They go into exile to shield a rival, as in *Where Love Is*, or to save the heroine's father from bankruptcy, as in *The Belovèd Vagabond*. And the fact that the reader accepts their most preposterous actions with equanimity, and even with approval, is Mr. Locke's sufficient justification.

The truth is that the plot is the thing about which Mr. Locke, in his secret heart, has come to care very little; it is a mere scaffolding on which to erect a new structure of flashing epigrams, diverting paradoxes, absurdities veiling a wise philosophy of life. But a thoughtful survey of his books in the order of production shows at least this: that he has steadily weaned himself away from his first tendencies toward melodrama; that while one and all of his books are impossible when measured by life's actualities, the later ones have grown steadily more deliciously, refreshingly impossible with less and less of the ranting, bombastic, Ouidæque tone of his first efforts. Undoubtedly, the process of development culminated in *The Belovèd Vagabond*. If Mr. Locke is ever to give us a better book, or even as good a book,

he must do so by giving us something radically different, and not a compound of the same ingredients mixed according to the same receipt. And a mixing of the same old ingredients, as we shall presently see, is unfortunately a fair description of the way in which he has compounded more than one of his later volumes.

It is hardly worth while to survey in sequence all of Mr. Locke's earlier volumes in order to see the essential sameness of their structure; it will be sufficient to single out just two or three typical samples such as *Derelicts*, *Where Love Is* and *Idols*. *Derelicts* has one peculiarity: the hero, Stephen Chiseley, actually committed the fraud—or was it embezzlement?—for which he suffered a term of years in prison. Upon his release, he finds only one old friend who stands by him, a charming little lady, Yvonne Latour, a public singer of some note, whose experiment in matrimony has been so unfortunate that she cannot even feign sorrow when the news comes from Paris that the dissipated, absinthe-drinking French tenor who was her husband is dead. Now, Chiseley has a cousin, Everard, who is a dignitary of much importance in the Church of England, a man whose religion is of the pharisaic kind that teaches him it is his duty to disown and have no dealings with his erring relative. It happens, further, that this austere canon falls captive to the charms of "little

brown Yvonne " and marries her; and when subsequently the disreputable French husband turns out to be still living, the canon, with much heart-felt reluctance, discards Yvonne and has himself transferred to a charge in Australia or New Zealand, without making any provision for the woman he had believed to be his wife. Luckily for her, at the moment of her darkest trial, when a serious illness has robbed her of a livelihood by ruining her voice permanently, Stephen drifts once more across her path and these two human derelicts find mutual comfort and support in a purely platonic fellowship. And they never suspect it to be a basis for deeper feeling until the day comes when the canon returns to England to announce that the Frenchman is at last really dead and that he is eager to take Yvonne back and remarry her. And, of course, this is precisely the one thing that he will be unable to do, for she has outgrown him. Theft, drunkenness, bigamy, woven into a tissue of gross improbabilities—such is a fair summing up of a representative volume of Mr. Locke's very early work.

In *Where Love Is* we have one of the first of the long series of delightful and eccentric Bohemians that are Mr. Locke's special and inevitable creations. Jimmie Padgate, careless of dress and speech, superbly indifferent to conventions, has the misfortune to fall in love with Norma Hardacre,

beautiful daughter of a worldly-minded mamma, and duly drilled in her duty to marry advantageously. So, when she crowns her mother's hopes by accepting the financially eligible, but morally unspeakable, Morland King, and certain disreputable episodes in King's past life insist on coming to light, Jimmie Padgate saves the situation by assuming the responsibility of King's wild oats—and incidentally receives a bullet from an angry fanatic bent on avenging the honor of King's victim, who had added self-murder to infanticide. Such is the choice assortment of crimes by the help of which Mr. Locke drives Jimmie Padgate into exile, estranges all his friends, ruins his chances of winning fame and fortune as an artist, and reduces him to a garret and a crust—and, what is more, a rather shabby garret and a pretty dry crust. The novel really does not get anywhere; but it does give Mr. Locke an opportunity to indulge in some rather caustic irony regarding the mutability of women; because, after all, Norma Hardacre finds herself unable to put Jimmie out of her mind, and, much to the dismay of her family, consents to share his garret and his crust, and for a few brief hours raises Jimmie to the pinnacle of bliss. But it happens that when, by appointment, she goes to join him in his much too aerial studio, and enters, out of breath, to find it empty, she is struck with the sordidness of it, the soiled

tablecloth, the fly-specked walls, the cracked and grimy ceilings; she realizes that she cannot face a succession of days and weeks and months in such surroundings. So she pens a hasty, conscience-stricken note and flees incontinently.

Idols is easily the best example of Mr. Locke's earlier period. It is first of all a study of a woman who, having the opportunity to choose between two men, the one sterling and the other dross, takes the dross and spends bitter years in slowly learning her mistake. Yet, although Hugh Colman is the man of sterling metal, he is human and he errs. He foolishly contracts a secret marriage with the daughter of a wealthy and influential Jew; and when, too late, he goes to the father to make a formal offer for her hand, he learns that the Jew's opposition is immovable and that he has guarded against such a marriage by disinheriting his daughter in case of it. The two have a violent altercation which is overheard by servants. Later in the night Colman joins his wife surreptitiously by means of a side window; and he is actually in the house of his father-in-law at the very moment when the old man is being murdered by another intruder. It is inevitable that suspicion should fall upon Colman, and his arrest follows as a matter of course. His urgent request to Minna, his Jewish wife, to tell the truth and establish his alibi, is met by her frantic refusal, her tearful insistence that

he shall keep his promise of secrecy, because to tell means to forfeit her inheritance. The court scene is the big moment in the book. Irene Merrian, the woman who has married the wrong man, the woman who has worshiped idols, mistaking them for gods, knows by intuition that Hugh Colman, her husband's best friend and her own, is innocent; she knows that her husband shares her belief; she sees, day by day, as she attends the trial, how inexorable a network of condemnatory evidence is gathering around him. So, when she herself is called to testify, she deliberately commits perjury, publicly swearing away her own honor and convincing the jury beyond a doubt that the prisoner was not in the vicinity of the murdered man. And when, crushed with the strain of the ordeal, she leaves the court, sustained, nevertheless, by the sense of a duty performed and a friend saved, she discovers that she has convinced one more than she had intended. With the announcement that her husband will at once bring suit for divorce, the last of her idols crumbles into dust.

Whether you approve of *Idols* or not, the fact remains that, up to the publication of *The Morals of Marcus Ordeyne*, it remained Mr. Locke's high-water mark in fiction. With this last-named book we come quite suddenly to the period of Mr. Locke's mature development. *The Morals of Marcus Ordeyne* is the first of his books that fully de-

serves to be indorsed as refreshingly whimsical, the sort of book that might have been written by an Anglo-Saxon Anatole France in holiday mood. Yet told in epitome, it sounds like a tissue of absurdities. Marcus Ordeyne—Sir Marcus, to give him his due—is a bookworm and a confirmed bachelor, the hopeless sort of bachelor who occasionally enjoys a couple of hours with some child, because “the enjoyment is enhanced by the feeling of utter thankfulness that he is not my child, but somebody else’s.” The opening pages are a deliciously frank portrayal of egotistical content between his stolid English valet, Stenson, his fat French cook, Antoinette, his one-eyed cat, Polyphemus, his treasured *cinquecento* volumes and his long-standing and vaguely defined relations with Judith, an intelligent and sympathetic little lady living in “the purlieus of Tottenham Court Road.” And all of a sudden Sir Marcus’s carefully planned scheme of existence, even his code of morals, is rudely shaken to its foundations by a most unprecedented occurrence. Fate leads him one day to the Thames Embankment, where by rights nothing extraordinary should have happened to him, but where, as a matter of fact, he encounters a strange young woman, a poor little waif whose only knowledge of life has been gleaned within the walls of an Eastern harem, and who is now utterly dazed and terrified by the rush and

whirl of the metropolis. When this strange apparition in bizarre apparel appeals to him for help, and tells an extraordinary tale to account for her presence in London, it is the turn of Sir Marcus to feel dazed. It is not a tale which invites confidence, and Sir Marcus frankly disbelieves it until he looks into her big, innocent eyes. Then he capitulates.

I told her to give me time. One is not in the habit of meeting abducted Lights of the Harem in the Embankment Gardens, beneath the National Liberty Club. It was, in fact, a bewildering occurrence. I looked around me. Nothing seemed to have happened during the last ten minutes. A pale young man on the next bench, whom I had noticed when I entered, was reading a dirty pink newspaper. Pigeons and sparrows hopped about unconcernedly. On the file of cabs, just perceptible through the foliage, the cabmen lolled in listless attitudes.

And so on through a lengthy series of vivid trivialities the author makes his stage setting so real and his Sir Marcus so thoroughly human that by sheer force of contrast he wins credence for the young woman from the harem—and very largely because, however extraordinary we find her, we can never be any more astonished and bewildered by her peculiarities than is Sir Marcus himself. The subsequent story, which is of the kind that might easily be ruined by a clumsy touch,

and which in point of fact is delicately handled almost to the last, pictures the serious havoc wrought upon Sir Marcus after he has, out of pure benevolence, installed this unsophisticated and embarrassing young person in his bachelor apartments. It seems a pity that a volume which for the most part is written in a vein of indulgent satire and tender humor should be marred by the false touch of the harem girl's elopement with another man.

With *The Belovèd Vagabond* we come at last into full sympathy with Mr. Locke's methods and attitude toward life. In regard to his earlier books the reader was apt to waste his energy in trying to be sympathetic where Mr. Locke was secretly derisive. But in this volume, which, quite regardless of its ultimate worth, is without question the biggest achievement of Mr. Locke's career, reader and author are for the first time wholly in accord. The truth is that no one really cares why the *Belovèd Vagabond* went into exile, why he became a stranger to the life to which he was born and dropped down to a shiftless, irresponsible vagabondage. One is satisfied to know that the metamorphosis was accomplished, for without it we never should have had Berzélius Nibbidard Paragot, slovenly and erudite, impecunious and arrogant, disreputable and chivalrous, inherently irresponsible and lovable always.

But how is it possible, at second hand, to convey an idea of the pervading charm of a book whose very essence, like its title, involves a paradox—a book which forces us to find delight in the very things which on all logical grounds of tradition and education and habit of thought should be expected to disappoint and repel us? Paragot is not merely a penniless wanderer, he is not merely out-at-elbow, but he has lost much of the rudimentary sense of decency. His hair is a stranger to the barber, his hands are often in need not only of manicuring, but of the more elementary attention of soap and water; his predilection for absinthe makes it a nightly problem whether he can find his way unaided to bed. Nothing less than a *tour de force* could make us not only overlook the shortcomings of such a hero, but love him in spite of them—one might almost say love him the more on account of them. If he were different from what he is, he would cease to be the delightful, inimitable, big-hearted Paragot, sharing his poverty with various stray waifs, male and female, that come his way; accepting contentedly the chance means of earning a meal that are offered from day to day, whether it be fiddling at a village wedding or weeding a market garden or aiding in the excavations of the Roman Forum. And while we follow him on his wanderings throughout the length and breadth of Europe, with his two companions—

Asticot, the lad whom he adopts and who chronicles his life for us, and Blanquette de Veau, the phenomenally stupid and unattractive peasant girl, who gives him the dumb devotion of an animal—we lose sight of his failings and see him surrounded by a halo of kindliness and chivalry; in the midst of his present sordidness we think of him in his youth, the eager, handsome lover of the woman he has lost, the woman with the *petits pieds si adorés*. At first we hope vaguely that the shadow will lift, the mystery be cleared away, and Paragot be restored to his rights, his fortune, the woman he loves. But little by little, in proportion as it becomes clearer that this transformation sooner or later is bound to take place, we grow apprehensive for his sake, because the truth is borne in upon us that the change will come too late—that he has grown too accustomed to his vagabondage, too out of touch with the conventions of life ever to find happiness apart from Bohemia, even with the one woman in the world. But our apprehension is misplaced; for when the crisis arises there is just one course for a Berzélius Nibbidard Paragot to pursue, and Mr. Locke with unerring instinct has divined what that one thing would be. Nothing is better in the whole extent of this rare and delightful book than the unexpected and appropriate whimsicality of its climax.

This brings us to Mr. Locke at the crossroads,

with the alternative offered him of the commendation of the few on the one hand or the applause of the multitude on the other. His first genuine success, the sterling success of approval, by men of his own class, by the aristocracy of letters, was *The Morals of Marcus Ordeyne*. He knew better than to try to duplicate this success by anything short of an absolute contrast. Two books more dissimilar than *Sir Marcus* and *The Belovèd Vagabond* it would be hard to imagine. But at this point Mr. Locke chose to change his policy and to try deliberately to work over an old idea, as long as it would give returns. As we have already seen, Berzélius Nibbidard Paragot is a vagabond and an exile, because he has taken upon his shoulders the sins of some one else, some one closely related to the woman he thought he loved, the woman with the *petits pieds si adorés*. And having assumed this burden, he accepts with it all the consequences it entails; the necessity of playing the part consistently before the eyes of the world, of cutting himself off from all the old associations that had formerly made up the joy of living; and, hardest of all, silently accepting the scorn of the woman who does not understand. And in the end, he awakens to a knowledge that all the weary months and years through which he has been mourning for his lost happiness, a better and finer and more genuine joy of life has been within easy arm's-length,

waiting for him to reach out and take it. This, in brief, is the skeleton structure of *The Belovèd Vagabond*. And, like most skeleton structures, it is of small value except for the flesh and blood that it serves to sustain. For what Berzélius Nibbidard Paragot does is of infinitely less importance than what Berzélius Nibbidard Paragot is. His destiny is a diverting story, but his personality is an abiding joy.

Now, with no intention of being unfair, the reviewer who attempts in like manner to epitomize *Septimus* finds himself compelled by truth to do it very much after this fashion; to point out that Septimus Ajax Dix, if not quite a vagabond and exile, has at least cut himself off from his old routine of life because he has taken upon his shoulders the sins of some one else, some one closely related to the woman he thinks he loves. And having assumed this burden, he accepts with it all the consequences it entails; the necessity of playing his part consistently, before the eyes of the world, the necessity of cutting himself off from certain old associations that had once made up the joy of living; and hardest of all, silently bearing the wondering contempt of the woman for whom he has sacrificed himself, and who is incapable of understanding. And in the end, he awakens to a knowledge that the weary months through which he has bravely played his part have

really been a blessing in disguise because they have gradually been paving the way to a better and finer and more genuine joy of life that has all the time been within arm's-length, waiting only for him to reach out and take it. Somehow, there is a familiar ring about this. It almost sounds like a twice-told tale. Of course, to those who dissect plots with the elaborate care that a geologist gives to the bones of a pterodactyl, it may seem a vastly important point of difference that the sinful relative of the lady *aux chers petits pieds* was her bankrupt father, while in the case of the woman whom Septimus Ajax Dix thought he loved it happened to be a frail and erring sister. But in either case, the articulation of the joints, the action of the story, moves along in quite the same fashion. The vital difference lies here: that in *The Belovèd Vagabond* we have a group of characters that refuse to be forgotten; Asticot, Blanquette de Veau, the Vagabond himself, have taken their places among those permanent friends in the world of fiction without whom life would be just so much the poorer. But in *Septimus*, however much we may smile at the time, over whimsicalities of speech and action, there is not a character for whom we would feel a greater desire for another meeting than for the fellow-travelers whom we face for a brief ten minutes in a trolley car. Probably if we did meet them, we should not be aware of

it; but if ever we should meet Paragot, striding joyously along some rural by-way of France, even though he be no longer the Vagabond of old, but Paragot, the reformed Benedict, the landed proprietor, the father of a family, we should know him on the instant and joyously hail him by name.

And in only slightly less measure this is also true of *The Morals of Marcus Ordeyne*. Less human in its appeal, depending more upon little flashes of irony than on the whimsical tenderness that is Mr. Locke's most characteristic note, it nevertheless leaves an impression that abides. There is in it, more strongly than anywhere else, a certain flavor that is more Gallic than British, a sparkle that one must seek long to find in any other English novelist of to-day. It bears well the test of a second reading; not so well, to be sure, as *The Belovèd Vagabond*, but certainly much better than such volumes as *A White Dove*, *Idols* and *Derelicts*,—and emphatically better than *Septimus*.

And the reason? Well, no one, not even the author himself, can explain why one book has in it the spark of genius and another has not. But this at least can be said without fear of contradiction: that *Septimus* is curiously well adapted to the purposes of a popular serial, and that none of Mr. Locke's earlier volumes would have been nearly so well suited to this purpose. And

secondly, that if, for the sake of argument, we should assume that Mr. Locke had set himself to study over all of his other books; to select from them such incidents and situations, such epigrams and paradoxes as had apparently caught the popular vote; and then with deliberate intention had built up a story that should embody all of these popular qualities, we might have expected the resulting volume to be something not greatly unlike *Septimus*. Not that *Septimus* is undeserving of its popularity. On the contrary, it is exactly the sort of book of which the crowd—Mr. Ruskin's crowd—might be expected to approve.

For the reasons above given there was good reason to fear, on the evidence offered by *Septimus*, that the peculiar vein of Mr. Locke's humor was in danger of running out. *Simon the Jester*, although by no means a book of importance, was in a measure reassuring. And after all, when one realizes the nature of Mr. Locke's literary formula, it follows naturally that so long as human nature exists there is no possibility of his particular vein ever running dry. To word it crudely, his trick seems to be to take life as it is and then wilfully turn it topsy-turvy. He peoples his mimic world with bizarre characters verging on the grotesque, and then suddenly surprises us by a sense of their kinship—the sheer

inborn humanity of them. "What do people usually do, what do people usually think?" He seems all the time to be saying: "Well, my people are going to do and to think not thus but far otherwise. They shall do impossible, illogical things; they shall amaze and shock and irritate—and nevertheless you shall love them in spite of yourself, because in them you shall see the reflex of your own hopes and fears; your own strivings and failures."

It would be venturesome to profess to analyze the birth and origin of *Simon the Jester*. But let us suppose, by way of illustration, that Mr. Locke, in an idle hour, had been re-reading *Pendennis*, that he had relished once again those wonderful chapters recording the good Major's manœuvres to rescue Pen from the wiles of Emily Costigan. Supposing, as he closed the book, that his inborn streak of perversity had flashed across his mind the question, what would have happened if the Major, after rescuing Pen, had himself fallen victim to the charms of the Fotheringay? Of course, the analogy must not be forced too far. There is not one note in common between Mr. Locke's group of characters and those of Thackeray, because his mind worked along an entirely different groove. But the comparison serves to illustrate his characteristic way of turning the ordinary situations of life upside-down. Substi-

tute for the punctilious and dignified Major a man whom fate has picked out as a victim of its grimmest humor—a man snatched from a proud eminence of statesmanship and confronted with the fact that a painful malady gives him less than six months of remaining life. Substitute for the placid and rather bovine Emily a wonderful, magnetic creature of slumbrous fire; a famous trainer and exhibitor of wild beasts, with the lithe grace of a panther in all her movements, and the yellow glow of a cat's eyes in her glance. Substitute for little Bows the equally devoted and far more grotesque figure of a Greek dwarf rejoicing in the name of Anastasius Papadopoulos, with his company of trained cats, his extraordinary jargon of modern languages and his homicidal mania, rioting through the book like a figure taken straight out of an Offenbach libretto—and you have a fair idea of the structure and material of *Simon the Jester*.

To turn from the relative mediocrity of these last two volumes to *The Glory of Clementina*, which followed them rather closely in point of time, is to experience a genuine and unexpected pleasure—and also to feel the comforting assurance that, even if Mr. Locke's talent has in a measure been commercialized, he has his hours of independence. Despite its title, *The Glory of Clementina* is quite as much the story of a man as of a

woman; and both the man and the woman have reached that point in life which thoughtless young people are apt to regard as middle age, but which nevertheless still has many of the best years ahead of it. The man is in certain respects a twentieth century Job—the credit of this comparison is due, not to the reviewer, but to Mr. Locke himself—like Job, he has always prospered abundantly; the good things of life have come to him without effort, and no disappointment or deception has ever shaken his child-like faith in the fundamental kindness and honesty of his fellow-men. At the opening of the story he is a widower of some years' standing and the nominal senior partner in an old and highly respected law firm, the practical management of which he has for years entrusted to the junior member of the firm. His own time is pleasantly filled in with archeological pursuits; and a newly received case of flint arrow-heads or some fragments of a cave-dweller's skull afford him the keenest enjoyment that his placid life has known. All of a sudden, as in the case of Job, the even tenor of his life is interrupted. His junior partner absconds, leaving a mountain of debts, a stain of dishonor upon the old firm name, and an unpleasant question whether he himself has not been guilty of criminal negligence. The ungentle treatment that he receives in the course of the inevitable prosecution that follows,

the caustic personalities indulged in by the public press, the cold reception that he meets from former friends, all play their part in undermining his faith in human nature; and when, close upon the heels of these misfortunes, there comes, first, the news that a rich old uncle had disinherited him; and, secondly, the discovery of a letter which convinces him of the faithlessness of the dead wife around whose memory he has built a sort of shrine, the critical point is reached, and a series of explosions of considerable violence are bound to follow. On the other hand, we have in Clementina a woman whose illusions all died in early youth. She has gone through the years which followed, with no expectation of happiness, no belief that the world has anything in store for her, excepting such material gain as she can wrest from it with the work of her own hands. By profession she is a portrait painter, and is already recognized as one of the most able and most popular artists in all London. She can command her own price; she has means to live where and how she pleases, to robe herself regally, to be an important factor in the social world. But she chooses, instead, to remain in her old Bohemian surroundings, to wear shabby, out-of-date clothes, to twist her hair into any sort of a coil that will take the least possible trouble, and altogether allow herself to grow old before her time. These two human beings, the

man in whom pessimism is a newborn and abnormal trait, and the woman who for half her life has not known what it is to trust her fellow-men, are thrown together by Mr. Locke, through a series of characteristically whimsical associations, skilfully calculated to bring to the surface whatever latent tenderness may still be lurking in each of them; and any one familiar with Mr. Locke's methods may make a fairly accurate guess as to the final outcome. One cannot, however, resist the impulse to add just this one last word: namely, that although many another writer has depicted the rejuvenating power of love, no one has ever done it in a bolder or more brilliantly spectacular manner than that of Mr. Locke, in the chapter showing us Clementina in all her glory, presiding at a banquet especially designed to enhance her own charms and throw her one and only rival everlastingly into the shade.

This is a propitious moment at which to take temporary leave of Mr. Locke. With *Septimus* he came to the parting of the ways, and quite obviously took the wrong turning. It looks now as though he had discovered his mistake in time and had made haste to retrace his steps and get his feet once more planted firmly on his one sure path. An indulgent irony, a kindly and sympathetic understanding of the foibles and follies of his brother men and sister women is the underlying

note of all his books, the best and the worst alike. "When the soul laughs, tears come into the eyes," says Berzélius Nibbidard Paragot; and it is with this same paradoxical mingling of emotions, with a mist before the eyes and laughter in the soul, that one reads the best pages of William John Locke.



JOHN GALSWORTHY

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THE obvious facts about Mr. John Galsworthy's position in literature at the present hour may be briefly summed up as follows: He is still, comparatively speaking, a young man, being yet in the early forties; he has produced six novels and a couple of volumes of brief sketches which have received much discriminating praise, and little, if any, serious censure; he has produced several plays which have met with cordial approval on both sides of the Atlantic; and he has been hailed in England as one of the foremost apostles of the new school of fiction. It is interesting to inquire to what extent this flatteringly high valuation is deserved.

There are almost as many ways of measuring the worth of a novel as there are critics. Yet, whatever standard of criticism we may adopt, the fact remains that at least three factors are essential to the production of fiction: First, the author's ability to see life as it is; secondly, his possession of certain definite ideas about what he sees; and lastly, a mastery of the technique requisite to convert these ideas into a piece of finished

artistry. In other words, the importance of any novelist may be fairly well determined by inquiring as to his methods, his material and his philosophy of life. Let us consider these three questions in their relation to Mr. Galsworthy.

In the first place, it may be conceded that the author of *Fraternity* has come to be a craftsman of high order. His work, even that of his earlier period in which the apprentice touch is still perceptible, conveys an impression of unity, of absolute singleness of purpose and of mood. He seems to have known by instinct, from the beginning, certain principles of good construction which many another novelist of importance has acquired slowly and gropingly, or perhaps has never acquired at all. He has an admirable sense of proportion; he never wastes time or space on minor characters or unessential descriptions. He possesses, beyond any other English novelist of the younger generation, that invaluable gift of making every little detail of character, every separate brush-stroke of his minutely careful backgrounds convey something essential to our comprehension of his story as a whole. As an observant critic recently pointed out in the *Westminster Review*, Mr. Galsworthy shares with Dickens a tendency to personify inanimate objects, to describe, for instance, the physiognomy of a house, as though it were possessed of human features—

but with this vital difference, that Dickens carelessly threw off such descriptions through a whimsical love of them for their own sake, while behind the similar passages in Mr. Galsworthy's writings there always lies a definite purpose, the purpose of showing how man and his environment react upon each other—how, for instance, the personality of a certain house reveals in a curiously intimate way the character of its occupants.

Furthermore, Mr. Galsworthy started, not only with a certain intuitive knowledge of technique, but with what is still more valuable, an unusual power of self-criticism. His published volumes, taken in chronological order, disclose most significantly his aptitude for learning, his ability to see the weak points in his structure and to avoid them in subsequent productions. Considered purely from the point of technique, each novel shows a successive forward stride, a realization that such-and-such an error must not be committed again. *Villa Rubein*, published as early as 1900, is in this connection a negligible quantity; it is a pleasant little story of a love match which arouses family opposition because the man in question is not merely a struggling painter, but something of an anarchist besides. The handling of the plot is adequate enough, considered as a first attempt; yet the book contains scarcely a hint of the really big and serious work which was

to come later from the same hand. *The Island Pharisees*, which followed after an interval of four years, brought Mr. Galsworthy for the first time into prominence and revealed his characteristic outlook upon life. As is generally admitted, it is, in point of construction, the weakest of all his stories, the one with the thinnest plot. It is merely the chronicle of the experiences of a man who, because he has grown disgusted with the smug self-complacency of the particular social environment to which he was born, tries to escape from it, and to this end moves successively through the various other social circles of modern British life; and everywhere, in the higher strata, equally with the lower, he encounters practically the same smugness, the same Pharisaical thanking of God. With all its structural weakness, *The Island Pharisees* was a book that loomed up rather large above the average shallowness of current fiction. Yet Mr. Galsworthy learned from it the profitable lesson that a picaresque string of episodes, with a constant procession of new scenes and new people, even when bound together by an unmistakable singleness of purpose, falls short of the higher standard of good construction. At all events, in his following volume, *The Man of Property*, he once and for all abandoned the picaresque method.

In spite of a certain rather formidable bulkiness and an almost too obtrusive purpose, *The Man*

of Property is a strong candidate for first place among Mr. Galsworthy's published novels. At least, it is the one which most persistently refuses to be forgotten, and for that reason demands a somewhat extended consideration when we come to take up his separate volumes. It is the chronicle of an English family of the stolid upper middle class, a family whose numerous ramifications leave the reader almost dizzy with their complexity. It is as though Zola's Rougon-Macquart cycle were condensed within the limits of a single volume. No one can say that the task is not skillfully performed; the intricate interlacings and crossings of all these varied family interests are as elaborately and as finely patterned as a piece of hand-made lace—but, like fine lace, they need the eye of a connoisseur to appreciate them. We all know that in certain books, as in real life, it is impossible to see the woods because of the trees; but it does not help us to see clearly, if an author takes, as Mr. Galsworthy has done, just one single family tree, and then envelops us in the impenetrable tangle of its prolific leafage. *The Man of Property* taught Mr. Galsworthy two important truths: first, that economy of means demands that a novelist shall strive for a maximum of effect with a minimum of characters; and secondly, that however keenly and vitally a novelist may be interested in the doctrine that he advocates, he must

not let it become more important to him than his art, or he will inevitably tend more and more towards writing sermons, instead of novels.

The Country House, which is admittedly the most generally popular of all Mr. Galsworthy's novels, represents his first attempt at strictly economical construction, his first rigorous elimination of all incidents and characters not structurally essential. It is a human drama concerning just one small group of men and women, yet involving principles of wide ethical import; the stage setting is limited for the most part to the happenings within the house and grounds of one county family; while the actual duration of time in which the action takes place shows a similar praiseworthy self-restraint. Having tested his strength in the matter of close construction on a comparatively modest theme—for *The Country House* is essentially of lesser magnitude than its predecessors—he now felt himself ready to attempt what still remains his most ambitious effort, *Fraternity*. Here is a book with a world-wide theme, the Brotherhood of Man; all London, with its social pageantry, its jostling throngs, its teeming, reeking slums, is mirrored back with an effect of motley, crowded human life, a sense of sheer weight of numbers, of humanity in the bulk, such as very few other novelists have succeeded in giving within similar limits. For, when you analyze

it, this huge epic drama of modern British life resolves itself down to just fourteen characters with what we may call speaking parts. It furnishes an example of economy of construction that closely approaches a sort of literary legerdemain.

Passing over, for the moment, *The Patrician*, which offers nothing salient in point of construction, we may take up the second of our three questions, namely, the nature of Mr. Galsworthy's material. In spite of his breadth of outlook upon life, the substance of Mr. Galsworthy's novels offers a rather surprising sameness. The keynote first struck in *The Island Pharisees*, is the keynote of each successive volume. British stolidity, British insularity, British conservatism, the unvarying fixity of the social system, the sacrifice of individual needs and cravings to caste and precedent and public opinion; these are the themes which Mr. Galsworthy never wearies of satirizing with a mordant irony. Usually, it is the solid upper middle class, the class that represents property, vested interests, capital gained in trade or in clever speculation in land. If *The Man of Property* were as good a piece of work technically as it is ethically, it would easily stand at the head of its author's achievement. Nowhere else has he given us, with such sustained and sardonic irony, a picture of the monumental complacency of the man of money,

blindly believing in his own supreme importance, living in a narrow little world of his own making, and unaware that there is anything higher in life than the treadmill of his own daily routine, the sum of his yearly dividends, the quality and vintage of his nightly bottle. *The Man of Property* is one of those complex, crowded books that cannot be mentally assimilated at the first reading. Although this is in a measure a fault, tending to limit Mr. Galsworthy's audience, yet there is a certain sophisticated enjoyment in the cumulative effect of a second reading, the discovery of little subtleties previously overlooked, mannerisms of phrase and action which it is impossible to forget. When the volume first appeared, at least one enthusiastic reviewer compared the pleasure he derived from it to that of tasting rare and priceless wine—and the praise was justified, both in its generosity and in the implied limitation that, in order to appreciate the volume, one must have the trained palate of the literary connoisseur. To many readers it gives an impression of dullness; a conscious effort is required to keep in mind the many brothers and sisters, the aunts and uncles and cousins who make up the doughty clan of Forsytes—for, with just one exception, the scheme of the book admits of no interloper from outside the immediate family connections. Undeniably this in itself is an achievement of some

magnitude—this faithful portraiture of an entire family group, so vividly and minutely differentiated that we are conscious, at one and the same time, of the strong family likeness and the equally strong, one is tempted to say aggressive, individuality of every one of its score or more members. But Mr. Galsworthy is doing something a good deal bigger than painting family portraits. That the Forsytes, as the name implies, are symbolic of the great conservative class in England, would be self-evident, even if the author had not taken the pains, through the lips of one of his characters, Young Jolyon, to tell us quite precisely what a Forsyte stands for. Young Jolyon, the one black sheep of the family, the one who has belied the traditions of his house, by deserting his wife and child and disappearing from social circles in company with a young woman of no importance, save for the fact that he happened to love her and she him—Young Jolyon, in after years, chances to meet Bosinney, the gifted but penniless interloper whom June Forsyte, Young Jolyon's daughter, is soon to marry. The conversation turns, not unnaturally, upon the peculiarities of the family which Bosinney is about to enter:

“You talk about them,” said Bosinney, “as if they were half England.”

“They are,” retorted Young Jolyon, “half Eng-

land, and the better half, too, the safe half, the three per cent. half, the half that counts. It's their wealth and security that makes everything possible; makes your art possible, makes literature, science, even religion, possible. Without Forsytes, who believe in none of these things, but turn them all to use, where should we be? My dear sir, the Forsytes are the middlemen, the commercials, the pillars of society, the cornerstones of convention, everything that is admirable!"

"I don't know whether I catch your drift," said Bosinney, "but I fancy there are plenty of Forsytes, as you call them, in my profession."

"Certainly," replied Young Jolyon, "the great majority of architects, painters or writers have no principles, like any other Forsytes. Art, literature, religion, survive by virtue of the few cranks who really believe in such things, and the many Forsytes who make a commercial use of them. At a low estimate, three-fourths of our Royal Academicians are Forsytes, seven-eighths of our novelists, a large proportion of our press. Of science I won't speak. They are magnificently represented in religion; in the House of Commons perhaps more numerous than anywhere; the aristocracy speaks for itself. But I am not laughing: it is dangerous to go against a majority,—and what a majority!"

Such, in Mr. Galsworthy's own phrasing, is the symbolic meaning underlying the specific story of Soames Forsyte, the Man of Property. Young Jolyon is not laughing, neither is Mr. Galsworthy

—he is simply setting forth existing conditions as he sees them, underscoring them here and there a little grimly, yet, like the conscientious realist that he is, leaving us to make what we will of them. But whatever we do make of them—whether we think them the backbone of society or the chief drag upon the world's advance—he is right in holding that there is no room for laughter. They are too formidable. With their cumulative weight of safe investments, their impregnable bulwarks of landed property, they stand as exponents of the great physical law of inertia, the force that maintains the established order. Mr. Galsworthy's specific story concerns a crisis in the House of Forsyte which shook its defenses but failed to break them down. In the opening chapter, we witness one of its rare family reunions, such as mark the solemn occasions of birth, marriage and death—for the Forsytes, while showing a solid phalanx against the world at large, are individually too self-centered, too fixed in their own narrow orbits, to herd together without serious motives. The purpose of the gathering in question is to ratify, although grudgingly, June Forsyte's revolutionary act of engaging herself to an impecunious, Bohemian architect, a "half-tamed leopard," who is either ignorant or disdainful of the smaller social conventions, and has actually been guilty of paying a formal call upon June's

maiden aunts arrayed in a strange, outlandish slouch hat, redolent of the Latin Quarter. The way in which this interloper reacts upon the clan of Forsytes, who receive him with what grace they can muster, is in itself good comedy, of the sort, one likes to think, that might have won from the author of *Vanity Fair* the indulgent approval of a kindred spirit.

But the structural importance of this opening scene is that it introduces Bosinney the Bohemian to Soames Forsyte the Man of Property and to his beautiful and secretly disillusioned wife, Irene. In his stolid security of possession, Soames has not a glimmer of suspicion of his wife's growing physical aversion. Having at last, on the threshold of middle age, found a woman whom he wished to marry, he has won her, just as throughout his life he has always won the things he coveted, by slow, indomitable persistence. And, after acquisition, it never once occurs to his monumental self-complacence that her love has not necessarily been included in the bargain. Up to the meeting with Bosinney, his rights of possession have suffered no encroachment. But shortly afterwards, Soames makes a series of miscalculations, due to the fact that he is dealing with temperamental people, devoid of a fitting reverence for property. He sees vaguely that something is wrong with Irene; he thinks that she needs a

change of scene and a new interest in life. A country house and the novelty of planning and building it seem to offer the required solution. Furthermore, it will give Bosinney just the opening that he needs, it will launch him upon a mounting tide of prosperity; it will please June, of whom he is really fond, it will allow him to pose as a benefactor, a patron of art—and, incidentally, he expects to get Bosinney's services at bargain rates in return for his condescension in employing him.

But matters work out far otherwise. Bosinney, instead of being grateful, seems to think that it is he who is bestowing a favor; he refuses to brook any interference, the cost of the new house augments day by day, and the result is, not an open breach, a manly agreement to disagree and end the contract, but a series of petty bickerings and temporary truces. And all the while, June sees her lover slowly slipping from her, and Bosinney and Irene find themselves gliding downgrade at a momentum that has escaped their control. Then comes the day when Soames's tardy jealousy is awakened, and he retaliates in a way eminently characteristic of a Man of Property: he sues Bosinney for breach of contract for having exceeded the specified estimates. What follows close upon this act of retaliation is too frank, too audacious, too poignantly cruel to be openly dis-

cussed, outside of a legal treatise upon the marital relations. Even Mr. Galsworthy's carefully veiled exposition of Soames's brief hour of madness touches the limit of what is permissible in fiction. Nevertheless, as the final word on that survival of feudalism, the Englishman's claim of property rights over his own wife, her possessions, her liberty, her person, the chapter in question is unsailable; it is structurally perfect, like that of the analogous scene in Maupassant's *Une Vie*,—with this big difference in favor of Mr. Galsworthy, that he gets full structural value out of the episode, and Maupassant did not. Certain reviewers curiously misunderstood the concluding chapters, and gravely explained that Bosinney, learning that Soames Forsyte's suit against him has resulted in a verdict that will leave him bankrupt, deliberately commits suicide by walking in front of an omnibus during a London fog, in spite of the fact that he knows Irene has left her husband and is awaiting him at his chambers. The key-note to the real ending lies in the words with which Soames tries to silence his clamorous sense of shame, that "women never tell that sort of thing." But in the next chapter we catch a glimpse of Irene in what is destined to be her last interview on earth with Bosinney; later we see him striding blindly through the fog, consumed with impotent anger and dreams of venge-

ance—and then in the final picture, we see a broken, miserable woman, who has crept back to her husband's hearthstone, too numb with grief from the news flung at her from newspaper headlines, to care what fate the future holds for her. And we leave them together, the husband and wife, the owner and his chattel—and for the first time in his life, Soames Forsyte has become conscious of the futility and the emptiness of such ownership. He has defended his own, according to his lights, and he has wrought nothing but devastation.

In its narrowest sense the central situation of *A Man of Property* is one of the commonplaces of fiction: a woman with too much temperament in bondage to the wrong man. The same is true of *The Country House*, with this difference, that the husband of the latter novel is a man of coarse nature and dissolute habits. Then comes the inevitable Other Man, sympathetic friendship drifting steadily along the course of danger; then the foreseen catastrophe, and the impending divorce. One of the most hopeful things about Mr. Galsworthy, however, is that he realizes that what happens, in fact or in fiction, does not matter half so much as the way in which people accept it—that there may, perhaps, be literally nothing new under the sun in the way of concrete facts, but that in the reaction of these facts upon the minds of men and

women there is something perennially new. If the story of George Pendyce and Helen Bellew were the only interest or even the central interest of *The Country House*, there would have been small purpose in writing it and even less purpose in discussing it. But what Mr. Galsworthy has done is to use this episode of human frailty much as a scientist uses a germ culture, to study its effects upon others. The central interest is the little world of English country life, within a few miles' radius of the village of Worsted Skeynes, and more especially the world which centers in the ancient and honorable house of Pendyce. It is a wonderfully vivid and detailed picture of stolid and complacent British conservatism, a consistent worship of the God of Things as They Are. Mr. Horace Pendyce, the present head of the house, is shown to us as a man whose daily prayer is, "Make me such a man as my father was before me, and make my son after me such a man as I am to-day." But it happens that his eldest son George is not in the least such a man as his father, or he never could have so far forgotten his duty to the traditional honor of the name of Pendyce as to bring upon it the stain of a divorce suit. The episode of George's love for Helen Bellew is sketched in between the lines, as it were, in something of the indirect, intangible fashion that Mr. James adopted for showing us Chad Newsome's

similar experience in *The Ambassadors*. Mr. Galsworthy has a trick of saying a great deal very much to the point in just one illuminating phrase, as where he makes another woman define Helen Bellew as "one of those women you never can look at without seeing that she has a—a—body." You catch fugitive glimpses of the lovers, now in the gloom of a conservatory, now in the tawdry seclusion of some isolated restaurant; but even these glimpses are not direct, they are reflected through the eyes of some third person, the horrified gaze of the rector of Worsted Skeynes, or the obsequious glance of the cross-eyed, consumptive waiter as he "lays her cloak upon her with adoring hands." But what we do see, in the full, clear light of day, is the consternation that overspreads the world of Worsted Skeynes; the disarrangement of an intricate and delicately adjusted social order; the break in a family tradition; the wrong done by the future master of Worsted Skeynes, not to the woman, not to himself, but to the name he bears. That is the point of view upon which Mr. Galsworthy turns the full, white light of his vigorous style. The one thing that the elder Pendyce fears more than all else at this juncture is that "George may stand by her," may even want eventually to marry her, and thus bring an evil strain into the future generations of Pendyce. But, like so many situations in real

life, matters adjust themselves quite simply and a great deal of anxiety has been expended for nothing. The lady wearies of the attachment, the divorce proceedings are dropped, the dignity of the house of Pendyce is saved, and behind it all we perceive Mr. Galsworthy's ironic smile at the injustice and the follies of the Social Fabric.

Fraternity, which comes next in chronological order, is in more respects than one a distinct advance upon its author's earlier work. It lacks, to be sure, something of that delightful aggressiveness which one divines behind the satiric pose in *The Man of Property*; it suggests that, if Mr. Galsworthy's pulse has not grown calmer, he has gained in self-restraint. Be this as it may, *Fraternity* still stands, both in method and in theme, the most ambitious, the most serious, the most wide-reaching of all his novels. In the London of today it asks the world-old question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" It takes up and develops with an epic breadth of treatment the whole range of human responsibility, the whole mooted problem of "Who is my neighbor?" And it does all this, not in the broad, flamboyant, Zolaesque manner, but with a surprising economy of means in stage-setting as well as in cast of characters. You are made to feel that you have been looking out over an immeasurable expanse of life and surveying humanity in the mass through all the infinite

gradations of social strata. Yet when you stop to consider, you realize that the whole story has been limited to practically fourteen characters, the whole range of scene to the interiors of two or three English dwellings. In fact, the extreme nicety of the technique, the rare art with which the art is concealed, justifies a rather careful analysis of the structure. The characters fall into two groups: On the one hand, seven characters who live in a sordid London tenement and typify the "submerged tenth"; on the other hand, a second seven, a family of charming, highly cultivated people representing what Mr. Galsworthy has somewhere in the book (if I do not misquote him) called the "emerged fiftieth." The second seven consists of two brothers, Hilary and Stephen Dallison; their wives, Bianca and Cecilia, who happen to be sisters; the father of these two women, Sylvanus Stone, a fine, visionary, symbolic figure, but of unbalanced mind—one whom an earlier age might have worshiped as a prophet, but whom practical modernity frankly recognizes as half-witted; and lastly, two other young persons, Stephen's daughter, Thyme, and a young physician, Martin, whose special hobby is relief of the poor through improved sanitation. It would be easy to spend many pages over the careful symbolism in this group of seven. No two brothers were ever more unlike than Hilary and Stephen;

no two sisters ever had less in common than Bianca and Cecilia. Plainly Mr. Galsworthy would have us understand that brotherhood, the sort of brotherhood he has in mind, has little to do with consanguinity. And yet he does not expect the world to accept the wider fraternity that his title preaches; for the character who serves as mouthpiece to proclaim a doctrine of universal brotherhood, and who pictures with impressive and lyric mysticism the sordidness and self-seeking of modern life, is Sylvanus Stone, the frail and broken old man whom the world has long since rejected and labeled imbecile. The other seven characters, representing the "submerged tenth," include an artist's model of the name of Barton; a married couple named Hughes, the wife a seamstress, the husband a street sweeper; a newspaper vendor, Creed, who, in better days, was a butler in a family of social consequence; and certain other inmates of the same tenement whose names are not material in a brief epitome of the story. Now it happens that Hilary's wife, Bianca, has artistic aspirations, and in the little model she finds precisely the type she needs for an ambitious symbolic figure, to be called "The Shadow." It happens, further, that Hilary, unlike the majority of his class, sees in this poor girl not merely a model, but a human being—a half-starved, desolate little waif, whom he cannot bear to allow to

drift away, without a proffer of help. But he learns a little too late that because the world is what it is, he is not quite a free agent in the bestowal of charities; he cannot give this girl even the most perfunctory sort of help without setting in motion a long chain of catastrophes, such as would be impossible in the world of mad Sylvanus Stone's dreams—the world of universal brotherhood. We are all galley-slaves to convention, Mr. Galsworthy seems to say; we are so bound and hedged in by our self-made limitations that we cannot break the established routine to help Peter without robbing Paul; we cannot, nine-tenths of the time, obey the social edicts of our world, and then for one-tenth disregard them, that good may come of it. Hilary's interest in the girl is quite harmless; but, on the one side his wife is jealous, and there are plenty of friends to gossip and sneer and believe the worst—and for a long time there has been in his marriage one of those little rifts that lead to discord. On the other hand, there are plenty of people in the girl's own class ready to misconstrue Hilary's motives; among others, Hughes, the street cleaner, who has already persecuted the girl with offensive attentions. And because Hughes's jealousy drives him into a drunken rage, he attempts one day to kill his overworked drudge of a wife, is sentenced to a month in jail, and through his absence is indi-

rectly responsible for the death of his youngest child. Now, because old Creed, the newspaper vendor, was once a butler, he still belongs by instinct and sympathies to a higher class than that into which he has drifted; so, when he learns that Hughes, the street sweeper, has planned, as soon as he is free from jail, to take vengeance on Hilary, Creed goes to warn the latter that the little model, who has meanwhile become the secretary of the fanatical Sylvanus Stone, must be sent away where Hilary will not see her any more. And to this Hilary gives his consent, not because he is afraid of Hughes, but because his wife, Bianca, believes she has grounds for jealousy—also, we are allowed to infer, because Hilary does not wholly trust himself. This, in brief, is the central pattern of a complex story woven out of many threads, showing what a train of disasters may be set in motion because a kind-hearted man chooses to buy shoes, stockings and a new frock for a forlorn and shivering girl; and the permanent estrangement of this man and his wife puts the last touch of mordant irony to this strong and earnest volume. And behind the individual tragedies of the story, the prophetic note of the half-crazed fanatic, Sylvanus Stone, sounds insistently as a *leitmotiv*, pointing out with the unfailing optimism of a fixed idea the joys of the millennium which is to come when the existing order of things

shall have passed away. This fine old symbolic character lives wholly in a dream future; the present is to him always a part of the past; he habitually refers to it as "In those days." Here, for instance, is a characteristic utterance:

"They have been speaking to me of an execution. To take life was the chief mark of the insensate barbarism still prevailing in those days. It sprang from that most irreligious fetish, the belief in the permanence of the individual ego after death. From the worship of that fetish had come all the sorrows of the human race. They did not stop to love each other in this life; they were so sure they had all eternity to do it in. The doctrine was an invention to enable men to act like dogs with clear consciences."

In short, both by implication and directly through his mouthpiece, Sylvanus Stone, Mr. Galsworthy seems to be saying, with all the force that there is in him, that Fraternity, in the broader and higher sense, is even yet the vision of an unbalanced brain, and that in this respect society to-day has advanced but little beyond the Cain-and-Abel conception of Brotherhood.

It does not fall within the scope of the present article to examine the dramatic work of Mr. Galsworthy. Unquestionably, he has tried some interesting experiments in that particular division of literature, and has succeeded in gaining for his cherished ideas a wider and more direct hearing

than he can expect for his books. It may be that he will tend more and more to choose the drama as his vehicle of expression, and that books of the magnitude, the crowded vitality, the superabundant suggestiveness of *A Man of Property* and *Fraternity* are destined to stand for a long time isolated on the library shelf. Aside from his plays, Mr. Galsworthy has produced nothing for the past three years save one novel, *The Patrician*, for which no better summing-up could be found than the familiar Tennysonian line, "icily regular, splendidly null," and a collection of sketches so fragile that one hesitates to dignify them with the name of short stories. *A Motley* is the title which he has chosen to designate what is really nothing more nor less than a verbal sketch book wherein he has drawn with swift, sure strokes a sort of fugitive impressions made by people and things glimpsed briefly during his daily coming and goings. At one moment, it is an unforgettable portrait of an aged crossing sweeper, twisted and bowed with pain, whose indomitable pride alone keeps him from the almshouse. Again, it is a subtle presentment of a furtive rendezvous at an out-of-door restaurant in Kensington Gardens—a rendezvous that would have meant nothing to the ordinary spectator, but from which Mr. Galsworthy's keener eye interprets an abundance of the philosophy of life. And still again, there is the flash-

light picture that he gives us of a young French marine, seen for an hour in a railway carriage on his way to join his ship, under orders to sail for China. His father is dead, his mother is penniless; and he himself, racked with a stubborn cough, foresees dumbly that he is destined never to come back alive from that deadly Chinese coast. The monotony of his hopeless refrain haunts the reader for days afterward:

Tell me—his eyes seem to ask—why are these things so? Why have I a mother who depends on me alone when I am being sent away to die? . . . And presently, like a dumb, herded beast, patient, mute, carrying his load, he left me at the terminus. But it was long before I lost the memory of his face and of that chant of his, "*C'est me qui est seul à la maison. . . . C'est me a une mère. C'est elle qui n'a pas le sou!*"

Slight as these sketches are, *A Motley* is a volume which might be profitably placed in the hands of any young aspirant in the field of fiction, because it shows how much can be extracted in the way of material from even the most trivial incidents. And for an understanding of Mr. Galsworthy himself, of the things which interest him, of the angle of vision from which he looks at life it furnishes more than one indispensable keynote.

This brings us down to just one more volume which needs separate mention, and a brief one,

namely, *The Patrician*. There is nothing new about its theme; the only difference is that this time Mr. Galsworthy treats of a stratum somewhat higher than his favorite upper middle class. He has nothing of importance to add to what he has already said in his earlier books; he simply reiterates, under slightly different circumstances, the injustice and unhappiness resulting from the despotic force of conservatism, the heavy handicap of those who live their lives not as they themselves would choose but as their rank dictates. In the vital issues as well as in the little details of daily intercourse, there is everywhere and all the time the invincible power of precedent, the iron-bound rule of prescribed conduct. The central theme of *The Patrician* deals with a young statesman whose misfortune it is to fall in love with one of the tenants on the family estate—a beautiful young woman living quite alone, whose isolated life gives rise to unkind and unfounded conjectures. It turns out that she is eminently respectable, the wife of a narrow-minded curate from whom she has separated and who refuses to help her secure her freedom. Now, her titled lover may make this woman his mistress, provided the fact does not become public knowledge; but by one of the unwritten laws of his caste, he cannot openly protect her, nor, in case she should obtain a divorce, will public opinion allow him to marry

her. The story is worked out quietly to a logical conclusion of gray and sombre tragedy. Mr. Galsworthy has been reproached for ending the book as he does and permitting both the man and the woman to acquiesce without a struggle in the decree of custom; he has even been misunderstood and accused of having changed his attitude towards the established order of things, and to have intended this book as a sort of recantation—all of which means simply that Mr. Galsworthy's art of self-effacement has become almost too perfect, his irony too subtle and elusive. Yet in this book he could not well have written otherwise than he has done. His purpose was not to preach individual revolt, but simply to show the workings of the existing system and the chaos that it wreaks in the lives of those who acquiesce in its dictates.

In conclusion, there remain a few words to be said about what, for lack of a less hackneyed term, may be called Mr. Galsworthy's philosophy of life. For practical purposes it is somewhat difficult to define a philosophy so largely negative and destructive as is Mr. Galsworthy's, so far as it may be read between the lines of his stories. Since he is a good artist, he usually refrains in his later books from openly expressing his personal views; and yet, the resultant impression that one brings away from his books is, that if Mr. Galsworthy were to be asked, "What is the matter

with the world?" he would answer sweepingly, "Everything is the matter!" What he inveighs against is not specifically the injustice of existing marriage and divorce laws, nor the British sportsman's thoughtless cruelty to animals, nor the sharp cleavage of class from class, nor any one of a score of recurrent themes. It is the System, with a capital S, upon which he is always harping; the immutable law and order of hereditary customs and obligations, that leave no scope for individual liberty, that grant no pardon for personal eccentricity, that make men and women so many helpless, docile, self-complacent cogs in the big machine of modern life.

Obviously, Mr. Galsworthy's interest in life is general rather than special; he is interested in humanity, rather than in the individual man or woman. In an essay already quoted in the chapter on Joseph Conrad, he bestowed what he believed to be high praise on the author of *Lord Jim* on the ground that "The Universe is always saying: The little part called man is always smaller than the whole," and that in Conrad's novels "nature is first, man is second." Mr. Galsworthy does not himself place nature ahead of man—nor as a matter of fact does Mr. Conrad—but he does put ethics and sociology, manners and customs, mankind in the aggregate, overwhelmingly ahead of the individual—and this, too, not-

withstanding his almost inimitable gift of graphic individualization. For these reasons he misses almost as much as he gains. He seems to see little beauty in the placid, tranquil lives of gentle old ladies, absorbed in the daily happenings of their intimate home circle, knowing and caring for nothing beyond these limits, and realizing least of all the narrowness of their lives. In a world where the opportunities for activity are so many and so big, what right, he seems to say, has any human being to be insular and narrow and self-satisfied?

It is too early to say with assurance whither Mr. Galsworthy is tending. His latest novel, *The Patrician*, lacks to some extent the vital grip of his earlier work. My own personal experience with it was that, having occasion to read it for a second time, after an interval of a few months, I found that the impression left by the earlier reading had faded out almost as completely as the image of an unfixed photograph. The *Athenæum*, in its review of *The Patrician*, said one rather unkind thing; it said that this was a book which might have been written by Mrs. Humphry Ward. And unfortunately the *Athenæum* told the simple, undeniable truth. It does seem rather a handicap for an apostle of the new school of fiction to have his latest work already identified with the materials and methods of the Victorian era.

ARNOLD BENNETT

IN spite of the mild scorn of Mr. William Dean Howells for that benighted portion of the reading public whose first initiation to the writings of Mr. Arnold Bennett came with the publication of *The Old Wives' Tale* in this country, the fact remains that this particular bit of ignorance was by no means confined to the unenlightened, and that a good many critics of long standing made the mistake of assuming that Mr. Bennett was a newcomer in fiction and the novel in question a marvel of precocious genius. Such a mistake was not at all remarkable because, unlike a majority of the novelists of his generation who have since come into prominence, Mr. Bennett failed to produce any early volume that attracted the attention of American publishers. If one takes the trouble to look over the catalogue of that admirable and unfortunately defunct collection of fiction known as the *Town and Country Library*, it is surprising to see how many of the younger reputations in English fiction are represented there by volumes which to-day it would be difficult to procure in any other form—Mr. J. C. Snaith, for



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ARNOLD BENNETT



instance, and Mr. Leonard Merrick. But Mr. Bennett was not of this number; and since he is one of those writers whose idiosyncrasies are largely to be explained by certain facts in their personal histories it seems well, before proceeding to an estimation of his work, to recapitulate as briefly as possible a few salient details of his life. As a matter of fact, Mr. Bennett is a man of forty years and upwards, with half of that period devoted to the pursuit of literature, and upward of a score of published volumes of fiction to his account. He was born in 1867, in the Pottery District of North Staffordshire, England, the district that he has painted in more than one of his volumes under the caption of "The Five Towns"—the smoke and gloom and narrow-minded conservatism of which seem to have followed him to his new home across the Channel, with the same haunting depression with which it follows his readers. He was educated at Newcastle, and for a time took up the study of law; but later abandoned it for journalism, accepting in 1895 a position on a London publication called *Woman*, first as assistant editor, and three years later as editor-in-chief. In the midst of these duties he found time to publish two volumes, *A Man from the North* (1898) and *Polite Farces* (1899). In a little volume which is largely autobiographical and which he has entitled *The Truth About an Author*, Mr.

Bennett has given us a rather graphic picture of these early years in London. He began his career as a free-lance in Fleet Street, with the belief that he had entered upon a glorious calling. He soon learned the grim reality. The free-lance he describes as

a tramp touting for odd jobs; a peddler crying stuff which is bought usually in default of better; a producer endeavoring to supply a market of whose conditions he is in ignorance more or less complete; a commercial traveler liable constantly to the insolence of an elegant West End draper "buyer."

In substance, the Bohemia of Mr. Bennett's experience is essentially the same Bohemia which George Gissing drew some years earlier in his *New Grub Street*, and not essentially different from the Bohemia depicted so vividly in Miss Sinclair's *The Divine Fire*. In Mr. Bennett's case, however, free-lancing in time led to better things, and he has recorded with evident satisfaction the keen joy of the day when at last he sat down to write his first novel, under what he called "the sweet influences of the de Goncourts, Turgenev, Flaubert and de Maupassant." The purpose uppermost in Mr. Bennett's mind, so he tells us, was to imitate the physical characteristics of the French novel. There were to be no poetical quotations, no titles to the chapters; the narrative

was to be divided irregularly by Roman numerals only. In short, the book was to be a mosaic of imitations of Flaubert and the de Goncourt brothers. Life being gray, sinister and melancholy, his first book should similarly be melancholy, sinister and gray. And, to cap this confession neatly, Mr. Bennett adds the fact that at this time he was twenty-seven, and the comment that "at that age one is captious, and liable to err in judgment."

This first book brought Mr. Bennett some little reputation, a few favorable reviews—and a number that were not so favorable, together with a rather disheartening result in royalties. For the mere sake of recording what the weightier sort of contemporary criticism thought of *A Man from the North*, it seems worth while to note that the *Academy* pronounced it "the kind of worthlessly clever book which neither touches nor moves the reader," and that the *Athenæum* defined its prevailing spirit as "not the poetry of the commonplace, not the romance of the commonplace, but the veriest commonplace of the commonplace." It was not strange, under the circumstances, that this first novel brought a certain amount of disillusionment, and that Mr. Bennett temporarily laid aside his theory of art for art's sake, and determined to write a serial of the kind that yields a revenue. He had had sufficient editorial expe-

rience to know the qualities that a serial of this sort must possess. His theme, to borrow his own words, was not original, but "a brilliant imposture of originality." The tale was divided into twelve installments of five thousand words each, and he composed it in twenty-four half days. Every morning walking down the Thames Embankment he contrived a chapter of two thousand five hundred words, and every afternoon he wrote the chapter. The result of this labor was sold to a syndicate for the sum of seventy-five pounds, and the author saw the gates of fortune opening. There were still some remains of an artistic conscience which prompted Bennett to sign his serial with a pseudonym. Several aliases invented by himself proving unsatisfactory, a friend offered him that of "Sampson Death." But the syndicate met this suggestion by saying that such a name would have the effect of depressing readers. "Why not sign your own name?" "And," writes Mr. Bennett, "I signed my own name. I, apprentice of Flaubert et Cie., stood forth to the universe as a sensation-monger."

The immediate result of his profitable sensation-mongering was that it enabled him to resign from the editorship of *Woman* and devote all his time to the manufacturing of books. He chose to make his home in France; and in his new and more congenial surroundings continued to turn

forth new volumes with a diligence and a speed that would seem incompatible with careful workmanship if it were not for the fact that his various volumes are each in its own class of fairly uniform quality. As to the ethics of debasing a talent of high order to pander to the popular demand of tawdry sensationalism, a good deal has already been said, and a good deal yet remains to say. Over and over again comments have been made, with all the varying degrees of irony, upon Mr. Bennett's versatility in appearing before the public "in a dual capacity as a writer of lucrative trash and as an artist"; but perhaps the matter has never been more effectively worded than by Mr. Howells when he wrote:

Apparently Mr. Bennett has found a comfort or a relaxation or an indemnification in writing a bad book after he has written a good one. It is very curious; it cannot be from a wavering ideal; for no man could have seen the truth about life so clearly as Mr. Bennett, with any after doubts of its unique value: and yet we have him from time to time indulging himself in the pleasure of painting it falsely.

In other words, gloss it over as we may, the ugly fact remains that Mr. Bennett has for more than a decade deliberately prostituted a talent that approaches close to the border-line of genius for the sake of cold pounds, shillings and pence. And

he has not the saving grace of a sense of shame. His critics, with many a sigh and shake of the head, have reluctantly admitted that his "marketable trash" has in no way injured in quality, although it may have diminished in quantity, the volumes in which he takes himself seriously. Their attitude is amusingly like that of a physician who is forced to concede that an over-indulgence in alcohol or opium has not impaired the mental brilliance of a patient. But in Mr. Arnold Bennett's case, I take the liberty of thinking that the critics are wrong. I am a firm believer in the doctrine that no man can serve two masters, least of all where it is a case of simultaneously worshipping at the altar of the Divine Fire and the altar of Mammon. Mr. Bennett, in his dual capacity, always suggests to me the two familiar classical masks of Tragedy and Comedy, neither of them seeing life as a whole, but each viewing the outside world with its own characteristic grimace. Now, it is a notorious commonplace that the man who spends the better part of his life as a paid buffoon, the court jester, the harlequin, the circus clown, sees life through the eyes of a confirmed misanthrope; the merrier the jest that he cracks in public, the more impossible it becomes in private to stir the lips into the wraith of a smile. And that is precisely what I think is the trouble with the whole series of Mr. Arnold Bennett's stories of the

Five Towns. It is not that they are untrue; it is simply that the joy of living has been sucked out of them, as moisture is sucked up by a sheet of blotting paper. Mr. Bennett has told us minutely of his methods of work; so many hours a day on his "Modern Fantasias," so many hours on his serious books, the books which presumably he still writes under the "sweet influences" of his chosen French and Russian models. But he is trying to do something of which human nerves and brain tissues are incapable. The world is revealed to us in a certain number of primal colors. And we all know that if we tire our eyes by looking too steadily, for a time, at any one of these colors, red, for instance, it grows dull to our perception—and if we turn our gaze to some other object in which the complementary color, green, predominates, what little red may be present is scarcely perceived, while the green flaunts itself in our face with an unprecedented effulgence. That is precisely what happens to Mr. Bennett; he exhausts his power of perceiving the reds and yellows, the joyous notes of life, in his purely negligible productions, and the consequence is that his mental faculties are too strained and too weary to perceive, in *Anna of the Five Towns*, in *The Old Wives' Tale*, in *Clayhanger*, any glint of those brighter, warmer colors without which, we all know, life would be too monochrome, too

hopelessly gray for human endurance, even to those inured to the smoke-laden atmosphere of the Five Towns.

None the less, it is the inalienable right of every artist to choose his own pigments. A painter may limit himself to cold black and white in painting a sunset; provided, of course, that he does not claim that a sunset in nature has no other tones. Mr. Bennett is an unrivaled expert in mixing leaden tints; his palette runs through the whole gamut of drabs, and grays, and slates, tan, and dun, and sepia. He makes us behold life, raw, anguished, hopeless life, through glasses, smoked not so deeply as to dull any of the poignancy, but sufficiently to rob us of the symbolic blue of hope. He is within his rights. He tells the truth about life—only, it must be borne in mind that he does not tell the whole truth.

It is difficult to master patience to speak even perfunctorily of Mr. Bennett's purely commercial productions, the series which he reels forth with such amazing fertility and which some remnant of artistic conscience compels him to label "Fantasias." They are all built on much the same formula; there is a taint of megalomania in their conception and development, a hugeness of setting and environment, an unparalleled and inexhaustible opulence of color and light, of ostentation and gaiety, of thronging men and women,

and the glitter of jewels and the sheen of priceless fabrics. *The Grand Babylon Hotel*, for instance, which was the forerunner of the series, introduces us to a vast fashionable caravansery in the West End; an American multi-millionaire, one Theodore Racksole by name, and his fascinating and self-willed daughter, Nella, happen to be dining there; and the young woman, out of sheer perversity, desires, in preference to anything which the elaborate menu offers, a simple beefsteak and a glass of beer. When it develops that this homely fare is not to be had, Mr. Theodore Racksole absents himself from the dining-room for a few brief minutes and returns as proprietor of the hotel, having purchased it for a number of pounds which probably looks quite imposing to the class of English readers who like this sort of trash. Now it happens that the Grand Babylon Hotel is a hot-bed of intrigue; that Jules, the imperturbable waiter, Rocco, the incomparable *chef*, and Félix Babylon, late proprietor of the hotel, one and all have their parts to play in an international intrigue involving the fate of the King of Bosnia. And in sheer justice to Mr. Bennett, it must be conceded that, if he cannot quite compete, on their own ground, with writers of the class of Max Pemberton and Phillips Oppenheim, he gives them, in racing parlance, a pretty good run for their money.

Of the same general character are *Teresa of Watling Street*, in which motor cars figure prominently and which one outspoken reviewer tersely dismissed as the work of "a literary trickster, a juggler in fiction"; *The Loot of Cities*, in which the underlying idea seems to be an appreciation of the delicious absurdity of imagining a young and genial plutocrat who, in search of diversion, hits upon the expedient of planning a series of colossal robberies, designed to cripple rival plutocrats in a wholesale fashion; *Hugo*, in which a story of involved and startling intrigue takes place in a gigantic shop situated in Sloane Street—the sort of establishment that closely approaches the American conception of a department store, save that it outdoes it by being constructed on palatial lines, surmounted by four or five stories of the most expensive residential apartments in London, and further equipped with roof-gardens, high-class restaurants, and endless other forms of physical and mental entertainment; and *The City of Pleasure*, a sort of metropolitan Luna Park, conceived, in the same spirit of extravagance, as a colossal popular pleasure ground yielding its proprietors an income of ten thousand pounds a week. In other words, Mr. Bennett's formula for this class of work is, in terms of bookkeeping, the formula of *Brewster's Millions*—only that it lacks the cleverness of Mr. McCutcheon's central idea.

Between his riotous melodramatic "Fantasias" and the Five Towns Series, on which his reputation is solidly built, Mr. Bennett has produced a miscellaneous lot of volumes ranging from serious to farcical and difficult to classify otherwise than by the unsatisfactory generalization that they are not cheap enough to be profitable merchandise nor fine enough to be literature. As specimens of this intermediate class, it will be sufficient to comment briefly on three volumes which happen to have been reprinted in America, *Buried Alive*, *Denry the Audacious* and *The Glimpse*. The first of these three is a book towards which it is not difficult to be indulgent, for it not only represents an honest effort to be humorous, with the further merit of succeeding, but it has an undercurrent of satire regarding the vanity of pompous obsequies, the elusiveness of fame. More specifically, *Buried Alive* is simply the chronicle of a very shy man, who for years has depended upon the services of his valet to save him from contact with the world, and when that valet suddenly dies the master in his first hour of bewilderment seizes eagerly upon the blunder of a strange doctor, who confuses master and man, and allows himself to be declared dead. Now the master happens to be a famous painter, how famous even he has never guessed until he is pronounced dead—and he has the dubious pleasure of reading long obituaries about himself, of fol-

lowing the stormy discussion that ensues as to the proper manner of paying him honor, and finally of attending his own funeral, when the ashes of his valet are laid to rest in Westminster Abbey. Such is the opening of an extravaganza which is never tedious, never vulgar, but from beginning to end permeated with that brand of British humor already made familiar to us through the Gilbert-and-Sullivan librettos.

Denry the Audacious is another name for a volume which appeared in England as *The Card*; and it is a question which of the two titles is more in need of explanation. A "card" is a person who lives by his wits, who can turn his hand to all sort of odd makeshifts, honorable or otherwise, and justify them by making them successes. In this sense, Denry certainly earns his right to the appellation. The hero's extraordinary name, by the way, which serves as the American title and looks as though it were the result of careless proof-reading, is briefly explained at the outset by the simple fact that Denry's mother, "a somewhat gloomy woman, thin, with a tongue!" found that she could save a certain amount of time every day by addressing him as Denry instead of Edward Henry. Of plot this volume is very nearly guiltless. In so far as it has any, it belongs to the *picaresco* type. Denry's adventures are practically all of one kind and they might have been ex-

panded and multiplied to fill a dozen volumes or curtailed to the dimensions of a short story. His audacity amounts to this: whenever he finds himself in a position menacing him with failure, social or financial, instead of losing courage, temporising, beating a retreat as sober common sense would dictate, he drives boldly, even brazenly ahead and wrenches a colossal triumph from the very jaws of disaster. A quite simple formula, you see, and one permitting of infinite variations. Add to this the fact that Mr. Bennett has a genuine sense of humor and the ability to make the most out of a paradoxical situation and you have the whole explanation why a book like this, which would have been a flat failure at the hands of ninety-nine writers out of a hundred, proves in this case to be very good fun indeed.

The Glimpse, the third volume singled out for separate comment, is evidently meant by Mr. Bennett as a serious piece of work; and while it is not to be put for a moment in the same class with *Clayhanger* or *The Old Wives' Tale*, it is none the less a work of distinct originality. Whether it was really worth doing is quite another question. There is nothing striking about the opening chapters; simply the usual commonplace situation of an unhappy marriage: a man and a woman, hopelessly incompatible, drifting steadily apart, he finding solace in intellectual pursuits, she driven,

through sheer restlessness, into more and more venturesome companionship. Then comes a day when, through a series of blunders that lead her to believe that her husband has learned the truth, she confesses her love for another man. The husband's sudden anger, stoically controlled, throws too great a strain upon his nervous system, brings on serious heart trouble, and is followed by catalepsy, and apparently death. Here begins the second part of the story, highly imaginative, strange to the point of uncanniness—the experiences of a liberated soul in its first glimpse of life beyond the grave. As a sheer bit of speculation, a brilliant juggling with words, the episode refuses to be forgotten. But sober second thought makes it clear that all such speculation is quite futile. The end of the story comes with a grim swiftmess. The man, as it happens, is not dead, merely in a trance, and after a few hours he struggles back, but the irrevocable has already happened. The foolish, wayward wife, who through all her folly has secretly loved her husband and no one else, is overwhelmed with remorse, when she feels that it is her confession that has killed him. And when he opens his eyes on the world again, she has already swallowed oxalic acid and is beyond medical aid.

Now, this is undeniably an unusual story, and an uncomfortable one as well; but no one would ever infer from it that the author had the power

to produce works of such real importance as *Anna of the Five Towns*, *Leonora*, and the several subsequent volumes that have for their setting a string of ugly, busy manufacturing centers in the pottery district of Staffordshire. In *Anna of the Five Towns* Mr. Bennett for the first time set his feet firmly on his rightful path. It has the same pervading grayness, physically and morally, the same overhanging veil of grimy smoke, the same dull helplessness of lookout that characterize what has come to be known as his distinctive work—much as a certain kind of glaze, a certain characteristic color come to be the hall-mark of a particular sort of pottery. Anna is the daughter of a miser, a Wesleyan Methodist, who has made a fortune as a potter's valuer and has retired, in middle age, both from his business connection with the potteries and from his former activity as a pillar of the Church. He is a widower and his eldest daughter Anna keeps house for him on one pound sterling a week, despite the fact that the miser is worth over sixty thousand pounds, and Anna has almost as much in her own right, inherited from her mother. Imagine a dingy little house buried alive in a dingy little row, a house to which no visitor is ever allowed ingress, and two forlorn girls, lonely, half fed, miserably tyrannized over by a consistently brutal and morose old man. It is not strange that when Henry Mynor,

one of the few successful and eligible young men of the neighborhood, proposes to Anna, she should at once accept him in a maze of bewildered gratitude. And having given her word, Anna is of that dutiful and conscientious type that will allow nothing to prevent her from keeping it. But sense of duty does not save Anna from learning from another man what love really means, and in consequence the grayness of life, which promised for a time to lift, settles down upon her more hopelessly and irrevocably than ever.

Leonora is another similar story of the same sordid life, constructed with the same solid and ambitious craftsmanship. The heroine has reached the threshold of forty years. "She was not too soon shocked nor too severe in her verdicts, nor the victim of too many illusions." She is the wife of an elderly manufacturer and the mother of three grown daughters; yet neither her years nor her responsibilities save her from dreams of romance and illicit love. There is a prosperous American whom chance brings to break the dull monotony of the Five Towns, and it is only the fortunate occurrence of the death of Leonora's husband that saves her from any worse indiscretion than a second marriage.

But it is with *The Old Wives' Tale* that Mr. Bennett achieves for the first time a work that beyond all dispute or cavil is of the first magnitude.

This is the book of which Dr. Robertson Nicoll expressed himself, on its first appearance, in these enthusiastic terms: "The story is a masterpiece, and it lacks only a touch of poetry to put it in the very front rank." And frankly it is a book which deserves all that Dr. Nicoll said in its favor and something more besides. It is only at long intervals that a piece of fiction appears which conveys an impression of such magnitude, such finished workmanship and such a fund of reserve power. There are many books which impress one with a sense of amplitude, a sense of being spread over a very broad canvas. It is much rarer to find, as in the present case, a book which gives a sense of depth as well as breadth, a book that has a wonderful, far-reaching perspective, making you feel that you are looking not merely upon the surface of life, but through and beyond the surface into the deep and hidden meanings of human existence. As in the case of all novels which really deserve the attribute of bigness, *The Old Wives' Tale* achieves its effects without the aid of a spectacular background or of exceptional and exalted characters. Indeed, it would be difficult to imagine anything more essentially mediocre and commonplace, more uniformly dull and gray than the whole external atmosphere of this strong and poignant story. A small manufacturing town of middle England, with scant sunlight struggling

vainly to pierce the veil of soft-coal smoke which perpetually overhangs it; a central square with its five public houses, its bank, its two chemists, its five drapers; and on the floor above the most imposing of these drapers' shops living apartments occupied by the family of this particular shopkeeper. Narrow, hopelessly conservative, unspeakably bourgeois in their attitude toward life, the Baines family, nevertheless, stand out in this story as fair average representatives of the human race, sufficient exponents of the three great mysteries of life: birth, marriage and death. There are, of course, exceptional people in the world, people who achieve great things, and whose names are enrolled permanently on the honor roll of fate. But to the great majority the sum and substance of life is, roughly speaking, somewhat after this fashion: there is a brief period of youthful illusion, when one forms brave plans for great achievements, and the years which really count all lie ahead in a glamour of rosy hope; and then, almost before one knows how it has come about, one is old, and the years that count all lie behind and the sum total of accomplishments, as one looks back, seems insignificant, and one is glad to cherish the memories of brief, fugitive happiness snatched here and there by the way. This is not an unfair picture of the average life of the great struggling middle class in an overpopulated coun-

try of the Old World. And this is precisely what Mr. Arnold Bennett has succeeded in giving us in his *Old Wives' Tale* of the lives of Constance and Sophia Baines, the two daughters of the bedridden old draper, through fifty years of hopes and hardships and disillusion. It would serve no useful purpose to analyze the plot of this volume, for the pattern is too intricate to be briefly summed up—it has the multifold and wonderful intricacy of actual life. It is enough to say that there are very few books in English which mirror back so truly and with such a fine sense of proportion the relative amounts of joy and sorrow that enter into the average human life—the unconscious selfishness of youth, the rash haste to reach forward and grasp opportunities, the relentless encroachment of disease, the loneliness of old age, the inevitability of death. Naturally the book is, with all its merits, a depressing one. It leaves behind it a sense of grayness and loneliness and personal loss, and all the more so because it possesses that rare power of making us feel the brotherhood of these commonplace people that fill its pages, and so rendering their successive passing away a personal and intimate sorrow to each one of us. Undoubtedly, a Touch of Poetry, that is to say, a strain of romanticism, idealising the meaner traits of character, the harsher blows of fate, would lighten the gloom and relieve the tension, but in-

evitably it would have shorn the book of its chief strength, the incomparable strength of literal and fearless truth. It stands out conspicuously as the one volume in which Mr. Bennett has justified his practice of painting in verbal *grisaille*.

When *Clayhanger* first appeared, it was announced as the first of a trilogy of novels dealing with the Five Towns, the central theme of which was to be the breaking down of the old spirit by the new in the central provinces of England. The first volume of this trilogy relates the history of a certain Edward Clayhanger, a master printer and son of a master printer before him, from the time of his leaving school to his somewhat belated marriage at the age of thirty-five. His state of subjection to his father, and the latter's justification of his tyranny on the ground that eventually the son will "come into everything," are only one part of the old order of things which Mr. Bennett tries to show in this trilogy to be slowly breaking up and passing away. It is impossible to consider *Clayhanger* in its relation to the rest of the trilogy until we have both of the remaining volumes before us; structurally, if taken by itself, it is undeniably an unwieldy, disproportioned piece of work, as full of loose ends and projecting corners as a chance fragment from a puzzle picture. Just how Mr. Bennett proposes to fit in all these irregularities and round them out into a finished symmetry

by the completion of his trilogy—whether, indeed, he can accomplish the task at all, or whether the finished group will still have the same structural defect, the same lack of proportion as the first of its members, it would be unfair to judge in advance. *Hilda Lessways*, instead of helping the situation, complicates it. Instead of sustaining the high standard set by *Clayhanger*, as a human document, it falls emphatically below the level of that volume; and instead of beginning the task of rounding out and filling in, it simply adds just so many more loose ends and projecting corners. In fact, to discuss *Hilda Lessways*, at the present moment, and before we know what miracle of ingenuity Mr. Bennett may achieve with his concluding volume, would be premature—as premature and as unfair as it would be to analyze *Clayhanger* from the viewpoint of construction. You cannot discuss the principles of proportion in relation to an unfinished building or a dismantled ruin; you cannot base an argument about the harmonic poise of the human body on a mutilated masterpiece like the Milo Venus. But, if we set aside completely the question of construction, and consider *Clayhanger* in just one aspect—the aspect in which, one suspects, the author himself would prefer it to be considered—namely, as a study of the unfolding and maturing of a single human character, it would be rather difficult to overpraise it. But it is neces-

sary, if I am to hope to find readers who agree with me, that I should add one proviso: namely, that they read *Clayhanger* intelligently, approaching it in a spirit of seriousness, as a deep and careful study of life deserves to be approached, and not as one seeking an afternoon's entertainment. We all of us have our instinctive upward gropings in early childhood; we all have dreams, more or less definite, of the great things we propose to do some day or other, with our lives; and we all find that sooner or later, an iron-handed destiny—predestination, if you like religious terminology; heredity and environment, if your leaning is towards the sciences—has reached out to say peremptorily, “so far you may go, and no further; you wish to do so-and-so, but instead you must do something quite different.” Such conditions are quite independent of the place in the world to which we happen to be born, whether socially or geographically; it is just as true of a small, middle-class English boy, looking out upon the smoke-grimed horizon of the pottery district, as it would be of some luckier brother in London or New York. Almost any one can write local stories that never for a moment get beyond the confines of the native village. It is the prerogative of just a few writers of Mr. Bennett's caliber to remain within the limits of their native village and yet at the same time to make their theme univers^{al}.

One can imagine, of course, some unsympathetic, unenlightened reader flinging aside *Clayhanger*, at the end of the first fifty pages, with the random verdict, "Oh, this is a tiresome story about a stupid old foggy who has a job-printing establishment in a stupid old town, and about his son, who wants to be an architect and has not brains enough or courage enough to go his own way!" and, so far as it goes, this is a true statement of the book's substance. Its value as a human document lies, first, in the untiring fidelity with which Mr. Bennett convinces us that his people are so constituted that they must inevitably have said and done precisely what he records, and not otherwise; and, secondly, making due allowance for local differences, that his people are much the same as people everywhere else, with the same hopes and fears, the same futile efforts, the same disappointments.

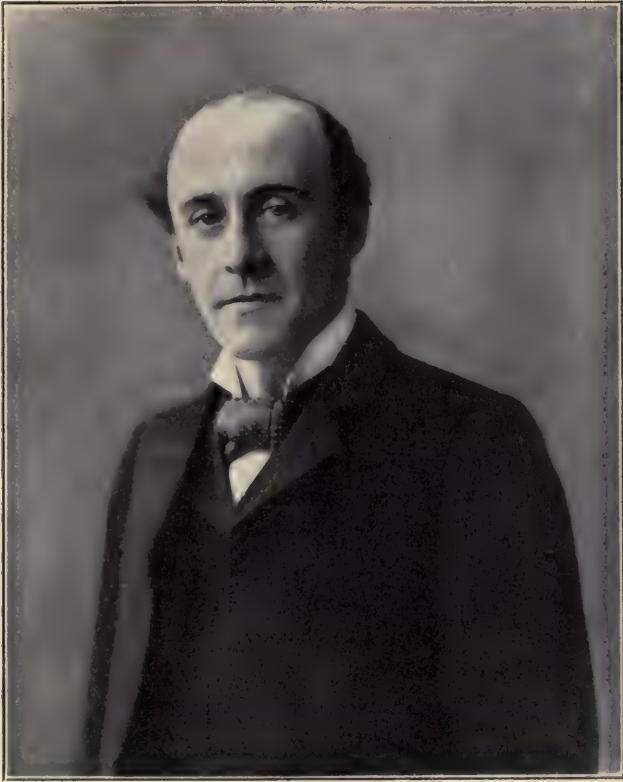
Clayhanger is a formidable task to undertake, if you do not chance to be in the mood for it. It lacks only two pages of a round seven hundred—and it does not even lack those, if you count the title-page and table of contents. But when you have once gone to the end of that book, if you are a reader of real discernment and broad sympathies, you will have added one or two names to your list of permanent friends in fiction; you will have been stimulated to the point of a few new

thoughts, or at least a readjustment of several old ones; and besides this, you will have been filled with amazement of a cumulative sort at certain unexpected flashes of intuition that Mr. Bennett is all the time exhibiting. You will find yourself asking over and over again, when you are confronted with one of these shrewd little observations of life, these illuminating explanations of the why and the wherefore: "How in the world did Arnold Bennett come to know these things, and, knowing them, succeed in expressing them in this inimitable way? How has he caught so marvelously the vagueness of mixed motives, that baffle all of us, when we try to explain our own actions?" For it is a fact that Mr. Bennett quite frequently dissects and analyzes human impulses and desires with the subtlety of a Henry James—and yet without obscurity. No writer is definitely placed during his lifetime; but Mr. Bennett is, up to the present time, peculiarly and exceptionally misjudged and alternately overrated and underpraised. He certainly does not deserve one-half the censure that you will find in the average estimate of his earlier books; but, on the other hand, there is an even greater exaggeration implied in the recent tribute by Mr. William Dean Howells, when he says, in effect, that since Flaubert and the de Goncourts, Maupassant and Zola have passed away, since Tolstoy is no more, and Perez Galdós and Arman-

do Palacio Valdés are silent, Mr. Bennett is the only living novelist he can confidently look to for pleasure. If my own enjoyment were so curtailed, I am afraid that I should find life overhung with the same leaden pall of gloom as envelops the Five Towns that Mr. Bennett has made famous. As a matter of fact, I could name offhand at least a score of novelists who may be trusted to provide quite as much pleasure as Mr. Bennett, to be equally true to the realities of life, and to be, in some respects, better craftsmen, and possessed of a higher ideal of art, a greater reluctance to prostitute it to the demands of expediency. But this does not alter the fact that Mr. Bennett is an exceedingly interesting product of the modern tendencies in English fiction, as contrasted with the American variety; and one shrewdly suspects that he has in him the capability of doing even bigger things.

ANTHONY HOPE

It is a sufficiently pleasant task to undertake to write a brief appreciation of Mr. Anthony Hope. The prevailing urbanity of his manner, the sustained sparkle of his wit, the agreeable expectation that he arouses of something stimulating about to happen, largely disarm criticism. Besides, he does not seem to demand to be taken too seriously; he is not a preacher or reformer, he is not trying to revolutionize the world; he is too well pleased with men and women as they actually are, to desire to make them something different. In short, he is a suave and charming public entertainer, and like all wise entertainers he alters the character of his program in accordance with the fluctuations of public taste. And being both versatile and far-sighted he is usually in the van of each new movement. *The God in the Car*, his story of gigantic land speculations in South Africa, with the Herculean figure whom he chooses to disguise under the name of "Juggernaut," appeared in 1894, thus antedating by five years *The Colossus*, by Morley Roberts. *Phroso*, with its romantic setting among the islands of modern Greece, anticipated by a year



ANTHONY HOPE

Mr. E. F. Benson's analogous attempts, *The Vin-tage* and *The Capsina*. When the revival of the English historical novel was at its height, he succeeded once more in coming in ahead of his competitors, and *Simon Dale*, which appeared in 1898 and is a study of Restoration manners, with Nell Gwynn for its central interest, led the way for *The Orange Girl* by Sir Walter Besant, issued in 1899, and F. Frankfort Moore's *Nell Gwynn, Comedian*, which was not published until 1900.

But although he so cleverly adapts himself to the trend of public taste, Mr. Anthony Hope is not an innovator; he adapts but does not originate. Yet it is no uncommon thing to hear him erroneously praised for having created two new and widely popular types of fiction, the *Zenda* type and that of *The Dolly Dialogues*. Now, *The Prisoner of Zenda*, as we remember at once when we stop to think, is not the first up-to-date sword and buckler story of an imaginary principality; it was preceded, by nearly a decade, by Stevenson's *Prince Otto*; and the only reason that it so often gets the credit of being the forerunner of its class is simply because it was done with a defter, lighter touch, a more spontaneous inspiration. Similarly, *The Dolly Dialogues* are not the first attempt to imitate in English the sparkle and the piquancy of the Gallic dialogue in the form that "Gyp" and Henri Lavedan have made familiar. Although it

is quite likely that at that time Anthony Hope had never even heard of it, *The Story of the Gadsbys* had at least three years the start of *The Dolly Dialogues*, and even though it was done with a heavier hand, it succeeded in getting a greater effectiveness out of the type.

But, after all, statistics of this sort, while interesting to a person of precise and inquiring mind, have little or no bearing upon the sources of enjoyment which a surprisingly large number of people undoubtedly find in Mr. Hope's writings. And there is variety enough among them to suit all tastes. He began in a spirit of blithe and irresponsible romanticism; he has gradually come, in his later years, to look upon life in a rather matter-of-fact way and to picture, by choice, the more serious problems of life in the social world to which he belongs. Yet his novels, even the most ambitious of them, never suggest the ponderousness of a novel-with-a-purpose; he never forgets what is expected from a conscientious entertainer. And one reason why he so uniformly succeeds is that he is an exceedingly good craftsman; he has mastered the sheer mechanics of his art. It is never wise for a novelist, whatever his literary creed may be, to be wantonly scornful of technique. There are just a few erratic geniuses who, because they have in them certain big thoughts that are struggling for utterance and apparently cannot

be uttered in the simple usual way, boldly break the established rules and make new ones to suit their needs. To draw an offhand parallel, they are somewhat in the position of a man who, although untrained in public speaking, is listened to indulgently because of the importance of what he has to say. But your public entertainer enjoys no such license; and the lighter and more irresponsible his theme the more perfect must be his execution. And it is because Mr. Hope possesses that magic touch of the born story teller, that such delightful triflings as *The Dolly Dialogues* and *The Indiscretion of the Duchess* seem to linger in the memory with perennial youth, while many another weightier volume has faded out with the passage of years.

Accordingly, Mr. Hope belongs to that order of novelists about whom it is not only more enjoyable but more profitable to gossip genially than to weigh strictly in the balance. It is so easy to become garrulous over volumes that have worn well and afford many a pleasant hour of relaxation. It would be purposeless to take up serially each one of his many volumes, analyze and pigeon-hole it according to its relative value. The better and the franker thing to do is to admit that there are certain volumes by Mr. Hope which gave the present writer genuine pleasure, and certain others that gave him no pleasure at all, and that those

falling under the first division are the only ones which it seems worth while to discuss. In his earlier period the mere mention of Anthony Hope conjured up scenes of spirited adventure, reckless daring, gallant heroes combining the good breeding, the patrician ease, the assured manner of the better class of young Englishmen possessing the double advantage of birth and education, who, nevertheless, despite their studied reserve and immaculateness of dress, are plunged by a whim of fate into adventures of extraordinary daring and sublime audacity,—adventures that would have taxed the prowess of Dumas's Immortal Three. It is a clever formula, this trick of taking certain types of familiar everyday people straight out of prosaic actuality and compelling them, whether they will or no, to perform romantic deeds against a romantic background. This peculiar combination was certainly a happy thought. It appealed to that latent thirst for adventure which we almost all possess; it unconsciously flattered the reader with a new sense of daring, a feeling that he too, if thus suddenly and surprisingly transported into Zendaland, might similarly rise to the occasion and achieve great deeds. There is no purpose served by analyzing once again the story of *The Prisoner of Zenda*. It is one of those stories the artificiality of which stands out glaringly the moment one starts to lay its bones bare.

Any story which depends upon the chance resemblance of two human beings, a resemblance so close, so misleading, that even the wife of one of the two is at a loss to distinguish them, takes on, when stated briefly, apart from the glamour of the tale itself, an air of palpable falsity to life. And yet the fact remains that tens of thousands of readers have lost themselves, forgotten time and space, in their utter absorption in the dilemma of the Princess Flavia, who finds in Rudolph Rassendyl all the qualities which might have made it possible for her to love her husband, if only he had been as close a replica of Rassendyl morally as he was physically.

I do not mind admitting that personally I revert more frequently to *The Dolly Dialogues* than to any other volume by Mr. Hope. This is not merely because of the delicate touch and epigrammatic neatness for which they have been so universally praised. Superficially considered they are a series of encounters between a sparkling and fascinating little lady and a sedate and nimble-witted gentleman, whom it is insinuated that the Lady Dolly has jilted. Now, the real fascination about these brilliant exchanges of repartee lies chiefly in the subtle and yet elusive implications that we are always on the point of reading between the lines, and yet never quite get in their entirety. That Mr. Carter has long been a worshiper at the shrine of Lady

Dolly, that he has many a time felt a pang of regret that his fortune in life has made him ineligible, that he considers her husband not half grateful enough to Providence and that his own assumed air of sentimental resignation has in it a little touch of genuine regret,—all this we get pretty clearly. And yet, we are well aware, all the time, that Mr. Carter, in spite of an occasional twinge of envy, would not change his condition if he could; that, although he may not be precisely aware of it, he is already confirmed in his bachelor habits; that he likes his freedom from responsibility, his harmless, unprofitable daily routine, his favorite corner in his favorite club, his innocent philandering with various young women, married and unmarried. He may, at times, deceive the Lady Dolly into commiserating him and blaming herself as a thoughtless coquette,—but never for very long at a time. The whole thing is a sort of grown-up game of make-believe in which the players get a curious transitory, almost illogical enjoyment in feigning broken hearts and blighted lives. And yet there is just enough truth underlying it all to suggest that Mr. Hope was capable of more serious work than he had yet done. There was, for instance, everywhere a pervading suggestion of the infinite number of contradictory motives and impulses that determine every human action, and the impossibility which every man and

woman must admit to themselves of deciding just how much gladness and how much regret is entailed in every least little thing that they do.

Almost without warning Mr. Hope proved that the vague promise of more serious work was well founded, by producing what, I think, the sober judgment of posterity will recognize as his most ambitious and most enduring work, *Quisanté*. Alexander Quisanté, from whom the volume takes its name, is not an Englishman either by birth or ancestry. He comes of antecedents almost unknown beyond the fact that they are a mixture of French and Spanish. With scanty means he comes, an absolute outsider, preparing to lay siege to the political and social world of London. In every way he finds himself handicapped. The foreordained course of education through which the English ruling classes pass as a matter of course and by which their prejudices and points of view are determined, has not been his privilege. In addition to this he lacks that inborn refinement which sometimes makes up for good breeding and social experience. His taste is often exceedingly bad; his manner is alternately too subservient and too arrogant. Of the higher standards of morality he has no perception; he is the typical adventurer, unscrupulous, insincere, monumentally selfish. But, to offset all this, his intellect is quite extraordinary; his brain is an instrument marvelously

under control, and he uses it at his pleasure, to bring the lesser intellects about him under his dominion. Above all, he has the gift of eloquence; and when he chooses to give full rein to his rhetorical powers, he can sway his audience at will, and thrill and sweep them with him through the whole gamut of human emotions. Of the men and women whom he meets, fully one-half are antagonized and repelled; the others give him an unquestioning, almost slavish devotion. But he has a personality which cannot leave negative results; it must breed love or hate.

The other character in the book who shares the central interest is Lady May Gaston, a woman who, by birth and training, participates in all those special privileges of rank and caste, all the traditions of her order from which Quisanté is shut out. There is another man, one in her own class, who would be glad to make her his wife. He is in all respects the sort of man whom she is expected to marry; and she is not wholly indifferent to him. But she meets Quisanté, and, from the first, comes under the spell of his dominant personality. There is much in him from which she shrinks. His social ineptitude, his faculty for doing the wrong thing, or the right thing at the wrong time, makes her shudder. Although fascinated, she is not blinded. She sees his vulgarities, she questions his sincerity, she even doubts whether he is deserving

of her respect. Nevertheless, the spectacular, flamboyant brilliancy of the man dominates her better judgment, and in spite of her relatives' remonstrances, in spite of warnings from a member of Quisanté's own family, she marries him, unable to resist the almost hypnotic spell cast over her by this man, who is something of a charlatan and something of a cad. The greater part of the book concerns itself with the story of the married life of this curiously ill-assorted couple; of his success in the public eye; of her gradual disillusionment, which, bitter though it is in its completeness, finds her somewhat apathetic, unable to feel the resentment that she knows she ought, unable to acknowledge that she regrets her choice. This, indeed, is the most interesting aspect of the book, the domination, mentally and morally, of a woman of rare sensitiveness and infinite possibilities by a man with whom companionship inevitably means deterioration.

The next of Mr. Anthony Hope's volumes, which personally appealed to the present writer, is entitled *A Servant of the Public*, and is enjoyable chiefly because of the tantalizing witchery of its heroine. Ora Pinsent is a young actress, who has taken London by storm. She has a husband somewhere, it is said, "whose name does not matter"; indeed, it matters so little that it does not prevent her from letting Ashley Mead make ardent love to

her, one Sunday afternoon, though all the while she "preserves wonderfully the air of not being responsible for the thing, of neither accepting nor rejecting, of being quite passive, of having it just happen to her." Thus with a single penstroke Mr. Hope has set the woman unmistakably before us. Throughout the book she practises the art of having things just happen to her, the art of dodging responsibility. With Ashley she drifts, dangerously one thinks, at first, until one sees how easily she checks his ardor when she chooses, with a nervous laugh, and a low whispered "Don't, don't make love to me any more now." She talks much solemn nonsense about her duty to the husband whose name does not matter, and about her intention to renounce Ashley, although one realizes that there is really nothing to renounce, nor ever will be. And when the time comes for her company to leave London and start on their American tour, here also she plays the passive rôle, neither accepting nor rejecting. It is only when the weary months of her absence are over and she comes back as the wife of her leading man, that Ashley begins to see her as she really is; only then that he feels her power over him has ceased; only then that he can say, "I no longer love her, but I wish to God I did!" It is not easy to convey an impression of a woman's charm, when it lies not in what she says, but in the way she says it; not in what she

does, but in the way she does it. But this is precisely what Anthony Hope has done triumphantly in his portraiture of Ora Pinsent,—Ora, with her upturned face, with its habitual expression of expecting to be kissed, is one of the heroines in contemporary fiction that will not easily be forgotten.

Helena's Path deserves something more than a passing word of commendation, for it is an excellent example of Mr. Hope's deftness in doing a very slight thing extremely well. It has an outward framework of actuality, the atmosphere of present day English country life; yet into this he has infused a certain spirit of old-time chivalry and homage that gives to his whole picture something of the grace and charm of a Watteau landscape. The whole theme of the volume, which is scarcely more than a novelette, concerns itself with a right of way. The hero's estates lie somewhere on the east coast of England; but between his land and the strip of beach where he and his fathers before him have for generations been in the habit of bathing lies the property which the heroine has recently purchased; and, unaware of any right of way, she closes up the gate through which it is his habit to pass for his daily swim. He writes courteously but firmly, insisting on his right. She answers in the same spirit, emphatically denying it. He refuses to be robbed of his legal

rights, even by a pretty woman; she refuses to yield, at a command, what she would have graciously granted to a prayer. As neither side chooses to adopt legal measures, a state of mimic war ensues, in which he continues to invade the enemy's territory, while she continues to barricade and intrench. And all the while, although they have not once met face to face, each is quietly falling in love with the other, so that when finally honorable terms of peace are concluded, it is already a foregone conclusion that the whole dainty little comedy will end with oaths of fealty and bestowal of favors worthy of a knight and a lady of the olden times.

With the passage of years, however, the author of *The Dolly Dialogues* has tended to give us fewer and fewer of these dainty trifles and more and more of his serious and careful social studies. In this class belongs *The Great Miss Driver*, and there is no exaggeration in saying that since the publication of *Quisanté* it is easily the biggest, best-rounded, and altogether worthiest book he has written. And yet, the first thing you are apt to think of is that the germ idea of the story goes straight back to *The Dolly Dialogues*; that in a superficial way, yes, and perhaps in a deeper way, too, there is a certain rather absurd similarity between them; just as though the author, having once made a pleasant little comedy out of a cer-

tain situation, had ever since been turning over in his mind the possibility of using it in a bigger and more serious way, until eventually he evolved the present volume. Not that Jennie Driver, heiress to Breysgate Priory, bears any close resemblance to Lady Mickleham beyond the very feminine desire for conquest,—any more than the Mr. Austin of the one story is a close relative of Mr. Carter in the other. The resemblance lies in this, that both stories are told in the first person by the man who in his secret heart loves the woman of whom he writes, but knows that because he is poor, because he has the natural instinct of an old bachelor, because, also, she has given her heart elsewhere, he must remain content to look upon her joys and sorrows in the capacity of a friend, and not that of a lover. To this extent *The Great Miss Driver* may be defined as *The Dolly Dialogues* rendered in a different tempo.

Yet, such a definition gives no hint of the strength, the variety, the vital interest of this story. In the character of Jennie Driver Mr. Hope has given us a woman whose ruling passion is to hold sway, to fascinate and bend to her will every one who comes within her sphere. And because of this desire she can never bear to lose the allegiance of any man, no matter how mean and unworthy he has proved himself; and herein lies

the source of her life's tragedy. She is not content to be merely the richest woman in the county, to play the part of Lady Bountiful, and build memorials and endow institutions with fabulous sums; she wants also to be a social leader with undisputed right to take precedence over all the other ladies of the community,—and this she could do if she married Lord Fillingford, whom she respects, and who badly needs her fortune; but not if she should marry Leonard Octon, big, brusque, rather brutal, who is cut by the whole county, and whom she happens to love. It is a rather unique situation in fiction for a woman to be forced into publicly slighting the one man on earth that she cares for; still more unique for a woman who is pledged to marry one man to be secretly meeting the other man, and thus atoning for deliberately cutting him whenever they meet in public. And, surely, it was a rather audacious thing for Mr. Hope to attempt to make us feel that in spite of her double-dealing Jennie Driver is a rather big and fine and splendid sort of woman; that she would have kept faith with Fillingford had he been big enough to trust her when appearances were heavily against her; and that in defying convention and scandalizing the little world she lives in by fleeing with Octon to Paris, she is doing the one big, brave, inevitable act. Yet, that is precisely what the author does suc-

ceed in making us feel; and when because Fate intervenes and wrecks the last chance of Jennie's happiness through the death of Octon, we not only sympathize with her bitterness toward the narrow-minded social circle that had forced her lover into exile, but we also glory with her in the big, carefully planned and altogether adequate revenge by which she forces the county to pay tardy homage to the name of Octon.

Notwithstanding the statement made at the beginning of this chapter, to the effect that Mr. Anthony Hope does not write problem novels, the volume entitled *Mrs. Maxon Protests* comes critically near the border-line. Mrs. Maxon is simply one more young woman who has discovered marriage to be something vastly different from what she had imagined; and her difficulty is of the variety which she regards as almost humiliatingly commonplace—namely, incompatibility. Her husband happens to be one of those narrow, self-satisfied, dictatorial men, with old-fashioned ideas about women in general and a rooted conviction that a man has a high moral responsibility for his wife's conduct and must mould her in all fashions to his own way of thinking. Mrs. Maxon bears the strain for five years; then she consults a lawyer. She learns that while she cannot get a divorce in England, she can leave her husband and he cannot force her to come back. At the time of their

separation, or to be more accurate, her desertion of him—for Maxon refuses to take the matter seriously—there is no other man in her life; but in the weeks that follow during which she stays at the country home of some friends with lax ideas of life and a houseful of curious and often irregular people, she suddenly surprises herself by falling in love with a certain Godfrey Ledstone and promptly scandalizes society by eloping with him openly and unashamed. The rest of the book traces, with a clear-sightedness that Mr. Hope has not always shown in his books, the subsequent career of a woman who thinks that by the force of her own example she can bring the whole world over to her way of thinking. He does not spare us any of her disillusionings, her humiliations, her heartache and loneliness. But through it all she is learning, strangely and cruelly learning, much that is exceedingly good for her. She is learning, for instance, that charity and sympathy and understanding are often found where least expected. She is learning, too, that there are many other standards in this world as well as her own and that they are just as reasonable and perhaps nobler. She learns that one of the best men she has ever had the good fortune to meet, loving her, pitying her, utterly disapproving of her, would nevertheless have made her his wife in spite of the scandal that had preceded and followed her divorce—but for

one reason: he is an army officer, and a woman with a taint upon her name would lower the social tone of his regiment and be in some degree a menace to the moral tone of the younger set. It is a temptation to analyze at some length the separate episodes of this rather unusual book throughout the years while Mrs. Maxon is slowly finding her way out of the quagmire of her own making into a belated peace and happiness. Yet, after all, what the book stands for is so admirably summed up in the concluding paragraph that one cannot do it a greater service than to close with one brief quotation. It is a satisfaction to find a book written upon this theme which, while recognizing that there is much to be said on both sides, shows neither vindictiveness toward the woman nor a misplaced championship that would exalt her into a martyr.

In the small circle of those with whom she had shared the issues of destiny she had unsettled much; of a certainty she had settled nothing. Things were just as much in solution as ever; the welter was not abated. Man being imperfect, laws must be made. Man being imperfect, laws must be broken or ever new laws will be made. Winnie Maxon had broken a law and asked a question. When thousands do the like, the Giant, after giving the first comers a box on the ear, may at last put his hand to his own and ponderously consider.

Such are the volumes chosen as a matter of personal preference, out of the generous series that Mr. Hope has so industriously turned out, during a score of years. Another reader's choice might be different, and who shall say whether it would not be as well justified? Because, the first duty of a public entertainer is to entertain; and, taking this for a criterion, the most that any one can say of his own knowledge is, such-and-such volumes have entertained me. It is obvious that Mr. Hope's own preference is for his more serious work, that with the passage of years he has grown more willing to allow the books of his romantic period to fade from sight. Yet, by doing this, he challenges a harder competition, a stricter measurement against a host of rivals. There has been no one to give us a second *Prisoner of Zenda*, excepting Mr. Hope himself,—notwithstanding that many another writer has tried his best. But it would be easy to name a dozen contemporary novelists who could give us the annals of another *Servant of the People*, or chronicle some further *Intrusions of Peggy*,—and one or two who, perhaps, could do it better. Mr. Hope is not one of the great novelists of his generation; but he is never mediocre, and even in his uninspired moments never dull. His *Prisoner of Zenda* and his *Dolly Dialogues* were both gems of the first water; his *Quisanté* certainly suffers nothing by comparison with George Gis-

sing's *Charlatan*, separated from it by barely a year. As a chronicler of English manners he is certainly of rather more importance than Mr. E. F. Benson or Mr. Maarten Maartens, although not in the same class with Galsworthy, Bennett, or W. H. Maxwell. He will be remembered, I think, somewhat as William Black and Marion Crawford are remembered, as having preserved a wholesome optimism, an unshaken belief in human nature, and as having done his part to keep the tone of the modern novel clean and wholesome.

MAY SINCLAIR

THE difficulty which must be faced in attempting to write a critical estimate of the work of May Sinclair, considered as a whole, is that this is precisely the way in which it refuses to be considered. Her novels are hopelessly, irremediably incommensurate; they have no common denominator; they reveal nothing in the way of a logical progression, of mental or spiritual growth from book to book, from theme to theme; *The Tysons*, *The Divine Fire*, *The Helpmate*, the three conspicuous volumes of three separate periods, might, so far as any sequence in thought or method is concerned, be the product of three different brains, striving diversely towards three several artistic ideals. The first is merely a clever character study of an exceptional man and woman, whose union inevitably leads to tragedy; the second is a prose epic of genius battling for recognition, a myriad-sided picture of modern life, flung before us with spendthrift prodigality; the third is a deliberately calculated problem novel, in which the finer realities of speech and action are sacrificed at the shrine of the author's purpose. In certain qualities of



MAY SINCLAIR

style, no doubt, it would be easy, if such proof were required, to show that as a matter of fact all the volumes which bear the signature of May Sinclair actually have emanated from her pen. Certain felicitous phrasings of description, certain luminous flashes of subtle understanding, leave the imprint of a distinctive hall-mark on all her writings. It is not the faltering hand of the artist, but the difference in the nature and magnitude of the inspiration behind the work that has made her successive volumes so astonishingly uneven, so impossible to measure one against another.

The plain and unwelcome truth which forces itself home with obstinate persistence, in proportion as one studies Miss Sinclair's literary productions, is that for the purposes of serious criticism, she is the author of just one book. Her other volumes are full of interesting promise; *The Divine Fire* is big with achievement; her other volumes are written from her head; but *The Divine Fire* came at white heat from her very heart and soul. The very qualities that stamp it as of the first magnitude are many of them conspicuously absent alike from her earlier and subsequent books. In her recent work, especially, she tends more and more to speak as one having authority, and her theories of life persist in looming up larger than the specific human tale she has to tell; while the great triumph of *The Divine Fire* lies precisely in

the absence of any such intrusion on the author's part, in its splendid and unvarying impersonality.

It was really quite curious, this sudden and bewildering fruition of unsuspected genius. It came absolutely unheralded. There was nothing in its predecessors, nothing in the uneven ability of *The Tysons* or the more finished art of a less pretentious tale such as *Superseded*, that would give even a hint of the cycloramic sweep of treatment, the breadth of vision, the deep, comprehensive human sympathy of *The Divine Fire*,—just as, despite the lavish praise of her admirers, there is no promise in anything she has since done that she will ever again rise to similar heights, ever duplicate her masterpiece. Nor is there anywhere a hint that she has the ambition to attempt it. Having once achieved a novel of the epic type, vibrant with the surge of human passions, the turmoil of civic life, she seems content to fling aside the formula, reject the spacious canvas and bold, virile brush-stroke, and content herself with the subtler, more etching-like precision of intimate home portraiture, the secret infelicities of married life. Now in the treatment of these delicate problems of sex, it seems, as I have had occasion to say elsewhere, in the chapter devoted to "Frank Danby," almost impossible for a woman writer to achieve the impersonal, scientific detachment of a surgeon presiding at a clinic; there is always

either a self-conscious reticence, or else, what is worse, that courage of desperation which ends by blurting out the reluctant words with needless and startling frankness. In her ability to write of such matters with virile unconcern, "Frank Danby" stands unrivaled among the women writers of England. To the normal and healthy mind, there should be no more embarrassment in reading even the most outspoken passages of *Pigs in Clover* than there would be in reading, let us say, a standard treatise on obstetrics. And this is precisely what Miss Sinclair, with far greater personal delicacy, cannot achieve. There are pages in *The Tysons*, *The Helpmate* and *The Judgment of Eve* in which the veil of intimate mysteries is snatched aside and human frailty so uncompromisingly labeled that the reader instinctively casts a conscious glance around him, in order to be assured that he is alone. This is a feeling that has come to me a score of times in reading Miss Sinclair's books; and the oddest thing of all is that there is just one volume that never for an instant casts even a shadow of this sort of sense of trespassing on forbidden ground, namely, *The Divine Fire*. And this is not because of any lack of boldness in theme, any cowardly closing of the eyes to the actualities of life; on the contrary, the book has that full share of human error and weakness that is inevitable in any cross-section of life, cut boldly

and on a large scale. But because the book is conceived on so high a plane, because in fact it has around it a halo of the sacred fire, the sins of the flesh are dwarfed to their proper relative value as factors having their significance in the development of human destinies, not as something to be whispered, with innuendoes, from behind a fan.

In order to see more plainly the gulf, both in workmanship and in ideas, that lies between *The Divine Fire* and all her other books, let us examine certain representative volumes of Miss Sinclair's earlier and later period somewhat briefly, reserving a more detailed analysis of her crowning work for the last. Miss Sinclair's works have come to us in America in such chronological confusion that their proper sequence in time is still a matter of considerable confusion, among a large proportion of her readers. *Audrey Craven*, which, I understand, is, with the exception of some *Essays in Verse*, her earliest published volume, is also the most easily negligible. It has cleverness and a certain kind of humor; and it relates, in a vein of light satire, the history of a young woman whose "long quest of the eminent and superlative" ends in the anti-climax of marriage with a nonentity; a fundamentally insincere young woman, who misses her last chance of attaining her heart's desire, because in a burst of frankness she confesses that once she had a terrible temptation:

It came to me through some one whom I loved—very dearly. I was ready to give up everything—*everything*, you understand—for him; and I would have done it, only—God was good to me. He made it impossible for me, and I was saved. But I am just as bad, just as guilty, as if he had let it happen.

And because the man to whom she confesses has the narrowness of a certain kind of religious asceticism, and agrees with her that she is “just as guilty,” they pass out of each other’s lives.

Mr. and Mrs. Nevill Tyson, which in the American edition suffered an unfortunate abbreviation of title, is, in spite of certain crudities, a book of much more serious import. Nevill Tyson is of plebeian birth,—his father kept a tailor shop at an early stage in his career,—and a cosmopolitan by education. He has lived largely by his wits, and seen much service in peace and in war, always just missing the achievement of fame or fortune. Suddenly, fate plays upon him the curious prank of forcing him into the position of country gentleman, a rôle difficult of fulfilment for a man who has scant liking for the country and lacks certain essentials of gentle breeding. Now, if Mr. Nevill Tyson could have been content to do the expected thing,—expected, that is, in the narrow social circles of Drayton Parva,—if he could have interested himself in the famous orchid collection of his late uncle, old Tyson of Thorneytoft; and if he

could have brought himself to marry a clever woman with an unassailable position, all might have gone well. But instead he chose to marry little Mollie Wilcox, a mere nobody with whom, scandal-mongers insisted, he had struck up an acquaintance in a public railway carriage,—but “an adorable piece of folly,” none the less, “an illusion and a distraction from head to foot; her beauty made a promise to the senses and broke it to the intellect.” “My husband says I am the soul of indiscretion,” she confesses blithely, while he, with more candor than good taste, says openly, “My wife has about as much intellect as a guinea-pig, and the consequence is that she is not only happy herself, but the cause of happiness in others.” What neither Mr. Nevill Tyson, nor the narrow souls of Drayton Parva society, nor even Nevill’s one intimate friend, Stanistreet, could understand, was that little Mrs. Nevill loved her husband with an all-consuming passion, that left no room for other emotions. She was unaware that Stanistreet was in love with her, unaware that Drayton Parva was all agog with malevolent gossip connecting their names. Stanistreet was to her simply her husband’s friend, some one with whom she could talk of Nevill when he was absent, some one who had known Nevill before she had, and could have told her many episodes of his early life,—episodes which the poor little lady was mercifully spared

from hearing. As for Nevill, a man who never in his life before had known what it was to care for a woman, he was for the time being curiously and illogically happy, until after the birth of his son and heir. And at this point in the story a paragraph occurs which deserves to be quoted at some length, because the subtle truth of it, the understanding of a certain type of man by no means uncommon, is almost uncanny on the part of a young woman in the early course of her second book. It brings back to mind analogous pages in that quite remarkable volume by Édouard Rod, *Le Sense de la Vie*:

Tyson had not the least objection to Stanistreet or Sir Peter and the rest of them, they were welcome to stare at his wife as much as they pleased; but he was insanely jealous of this minute masculine thing that claimed so much of her attention. He began to have a positive dislike to seeing her with the child. There was a strain of morbid sensibility in his nature, and what was beautiful to him in a Botticelli Madonna, properly painted and framed, was not beautiful—to him—in Mrs. Nevill Tyson. He had the sentiment of the thing, as I said, but the thing itself, the flesh and blood of it, was altogether too much for his fastidious nerves.

So, in order to hold her husband's love, that she feels is slipping from her, Mrs. Tyson sacrificed

her child. Weaned too soon, and intrusted to an incompetent nurse, it promptly and very naturally died; and when the mother reappeared in the village, showing a "hard, tearless face," all Drayton Parva "was alive to the fact that Mrs. Nevill Tyson was an unnatural mother." Up to this point, the book is an admirable little study of an ill-assorted marriage, made hopeless from the start by a man's monumental selfishness and the meddling of scandal-loving neighbors. But what follows is too violent, too extreme, too needlessly cruel; it lacks the restraint that is the key-note of good art. That Nevill is fundamentally incapable of remaining true to any woman is made sufficiently obvious; but that after the death of her child he should take his wife to London and then slip away, vanish from sight, leaving her alone and friendless, in the midst of her grief, is a little harder to accept. And when Stanistreet takes advantage of her loneliness to ingratiate himself by offerings of flowers, theater tickets, luncheons and dinners, and she naïvely accepts them all, because so long as Stanistreet is with her, she feels that she "has not quite lost Nevill," it seems inconsistent with the husband's character and with his deep understanding of women, that he should suddenly return, and, finding his friend with her, brutally accuse her of infidelity. Then comes the night when Nevill, after drinking too freely, causes

a lamp to overturn, and his wife rescues him, at the cost of scars which destroy her beauty forever. There are a few brief weeks when the man thinks that he can rise above himself and repay her sacrifice with a lasting devotion ; but the daily sight of that disfigured face is more than his "fastidious nerves" can bear ; so he raises a volunteer company and sets off for the Soudan, where he dies a hero's death, after having slain his wife by his desertion as surely as though he had put a bullet through her heart. The trouble with the book is that it is overdrawn ; the woman is a little more than human, the man a little less. The end is melodrama, the "brutal, jubilant lust of battle," and a "wooden cross in the shifting sands." It is amazing how readily an obsequious bullet, at the author's beck and nod, consents to cut short a misspent life at the psychological moment.

It is pleasant to turn from the amateurishness of *The Tysons* to a much more modest bit of work which, nevertheless, in its own way is very nearly flawless. There is so much simple pathos, so much genuine human nature in *Superseded* that only a writer of the first rank could have wrought such deft effects of light and shade from such slight material. It is merely the humble tragedy of a timid, colorless, inefficient school-teacher whom Fate originally thrust into a niche that she could never adequately fill ; and then, after she has spent her

strength for years in the pitiful struggle to do what is demanded of her, unexpectedly thrusts her out to an old age of helplessness and want. The humble little woman's unspoken romance, the harmless dreams which she weaves around the young physician who befriends her and who has already given his heart to another and younger teacher,—the one destined, as the irony of life wills it, to supersede her,—is the most delicate part of a story which eludes analysis, and gives it its chief charm. It would be difficult to point out another story in English which portrays with such quiet strength the pathos of inefficient old age, the anguish of discovering that one has outlived one's usefulness.

Superseded originally appeared just three years before *The Divine Fire*, the same interval of time that intervened before the appearance of Miss Sinclair's next novel, *The Helpmate*. Towards this volume I must confess to an antagonism incompatible with the judicial impartiality of criticism. It is a well-intentioned book, built upon an interesting thesis; but, because its chief characters are faultily conceived, it is an offensive book as well as an unconvincing one. With the central theme, that the narrow-mindedness of the so-called good woman has been the moral ruin of many a man, as surely as though she were a bad woman, I have no quarrel. I simply fail to see that in the present

volume Miss Sinclair has chosen a case that proves her contention. Here very briefly are the salient facts: Anne Fletcher has married Walter Majendie chiefly because she believes he is "good." The fact that he is not "good," that, on the contrary, the episode of his entanglement with Lady Cayley is still, after seven years, an unforgotten local scandal, is a matter which Walter's invalid sister, Edith, has promised to break to Anne before the wedding; but Edith fails to keep her promise, and Anne's enlightenment comes with cruel suddenness through a bit of gossip overheard on her honeymoon. Now, Anne is a young woman who is physically cold and unresponsive, but capable of a religious exaltation that is almost sensual. When her belief in Walter's "goodness" is shattered, she seriously questions whether his lapse from virtue, seven years ago, does not release her from her obligations as a wife, but finally takes great credit for deciding that although "things can never be as they were between them," she will nevertheless "try to be a good wife to him." Now, up to this point, we have good material for an interesting and not too unusual situation. The woman with an exaggerated conscience and a dormant temperament, the woman who, knowing nothing about the masculine nature, demands that he shall be judged and disciplined according to her standards, is a sufficiently common type; and when

she does not happen to marry her rector, or the curate or Sunday-school superintendent, it is more than likely that, from sheer force of contrast, her choice will be a man whose philosophy of life is more indulgent than her own. The trouble with Miss Sinclair is that she has very much overdrawn her element of contrast. Walter Majendie is not merely more indulgent toward himself and his fellow men,—and women,—but he is altogether of coarser clay, a man lacking in the finer sense of honor, a man who is not altogether a “bounder,” nor wholly a cad, yet possessing a kinship to both. He has an ill-timed levity,—an “appalling flippancy,” is her name for it,—that leads him into disastrous irreverence. When, on her birthday, he offers her an antique silver crucifix, and she hesitates to accept it, because “to accept that gift, of all gifts, was to lay her spirit under obligation to him,” he is so lacking in intelligence, so hopelessly out of touch with her mood, as to ask:

“Are you not going to take it, then?”

“I don’t know. Do you realize that you are giving me a very sacred thing?”

“I do.”

“And that I can’t treat it as I would an ordinary present?”

He lowered his eyes. “I didn’t think you’d want to wear it in your hair, dear.”

When on another occasion, he accompanies her to Lenten Service, he asks her, as they emerge into the open air, "Did you like it?"

He spoke as if to the child she seemed to him now to be. They had been playing together, pretending they were two pilgrims bound for the Heavenly City, and he wanted to know if she had had a nice game. He nursed the exquisite illusion that this time he had pleased her by playing too.

But his lack of reverence, his fundamental inability to respect her mood, even if he could not share her faith, is as nothing compared with his extraordinary acceptance of social complications that any man of refined perceptions would have realized to be intolerable. It is his misfortune, if not his fault, that his chosen circle of friends is a bit lower in the social scale than that of his wife. To complicate matters further, one or two of his closest friends are men whose past, and present, too, are not beyond reproach. They are men whom Anne's sanctimonious little circle rigorously exclude. Yet, considering that one of them in particular, a certain Mr. Gorse, is the man whom her sister-in-law, Edith Majendie, would have married, but for the obscure spinal trouble that came upon her ten years ago, that Edith knows Gorse's human weaknesses, and, like the big-souled woman that she is, understands and forgives them, and that

the only real joy Gorse knows is his occasional calls at the Majendie home,—considering all this, it would have been more magnanimous if Anne could have brought herself to extend a little Christian charity and show a simple civility to her husband's friend. Instead, she refuses to receive either Gorse or any of the circle to which he belongs; and, as her husband sees nothing incongruous in having them at the house for dinner on an average of once a week, the wife finds herself driven into begging the hospitality of one or another of her own friends, in order to avoid meeting her husband's guests. People simply do not do such things; and one does not know which to wonder at the more, the husband who would thus force his wife away from home, or the guests who would accept invitations in her absence. But stranger things are to come. Lady Cayley, the woman who seven years ago almost wrecked Majendie's life, and was bought off at such a heavy cost that Majendie has not yet been able to pay back the friend from whom he borrowed it, unexpectedly returns to town, is forgiven and received by her relatives, and actually encounters her former lover and his wife at an afternoon tea. A man with decent instincts would have been keenly alive to the humiliation such a meeting inflicted on his wife, even though she was spared a personal introduction. But Walter tactlessly allows himself to

chat and laugh with Lady Cayley for some minutes; and when he and his wife are home once more and she very naturally demands that he shall give up visiting at houses where he is likely to meet his former mistress, he stares in amazement and refuses:

"I can't promise anything of the sort. Heaven knows how long she is going to stay."

"I ought not to have to explain that by countenancing her you insult me. You should see it for yourself."

"I can't see it. In the first place, with all due regard to you, I don't insult you by countenancing her, as you call it. In the second place, I don't countenance her by going to other people's houses. If I went to her house, you might complain. She hasn't got a house, poor lady."

The man is hopeless. That is the book's chief and pervading weakness. The author wants us to espouse her hero's cause, and instead, with almost everything he says or does, he alienates our sympathy. Of course, a marriage so ill-assorted is bound to turn out disastrously; but the stumbling-block will not be a youthful error long since expiated; it will be the intolerable contact with little daily vulgarisms, the hourly verbal clumsiness, the monumental incapacity to understand the finer and subtler temperament of the woman. The under-

lying idea of the book is undeniably big; the situation at the end of ten years of marriage that has been a mockery of the word is poignant with tragedy. The inevitable has happened; after the birth of her child the wife has tacitly claimed her freedom; the husband has been patient,—but patience has its limits, and for the last three of these ten years there has been another woman, established in a snug little country house, who does her best to make up to him for the emptiness and disillusion of his home life. Then comes a night when his only child, a frail little creature with a weak heart, awakes from a vivid dream, declaring her father dead, and cries and sobs ceaselessly, refusing to be comforted,—until the strain is too much for the feeble heart, and she sobs herself into her final rest. To the wife there comes, simultaneously with this loss, the knowledge of the other woman, the knowledge that it was because he had gone to see that other woman that he had been absent when his presence might have saved the child's life,—in short, as her disordered fancy conceives it, that he is virtually the child's murderer. And this she tells him brutally, lashing him with her scorn. Now, an absurd charge of this sort is not in itself sufficient to bring on an attack of apoplexy; but the man has been under a strain for years; he is cut to the heart by the irremediable nature of the double loss. And as he lies hovering

between life and death, the woman has long hours in which to learn her own narrowness, long hours in which to repeat over and over the words of Lady Cayley, whom she scorned and who has ventured to tell her the truth:

“Look at it this way. He has kept all his marriage vows—except one. You have broken all yours—except one. None of your friends will tell you that. That’s why *I* tell you. Because I’m not a good woman, and I don’t count.”

It is because this situation is so big in possibilities, and the principle involved so vital an issue in hundreds of marriages, that it is hard to pardon Miss Sinclair her amazing lack of perception in blurring the issue by the needless complications of a special case, and narrowing down to a mere lack of breeding a question that ought to have hinged upon the relative magnitude of two souls.

The Immortal Moment, while far slighter in scope and significance than *The Helpmate*, is artistically a much finer piece of workmanship. It is seldom that a story brings to the reviewer such a sense of impotence to do it justice within the space of a single paragraph. One can, of course, assert its admirable technique, its rare truth of characterization; its logical analytical development; but mere assertion, no matter how emphatic,

lacks convincing power. What Miss Sinclair's book deserves is a detailed and painstaking analysis of the kind that takes much time and space. For, after all, stripped to its bare skeleton, *The Immortal Moment* seems a curiously inadequate framework upon which to fashion a story of any considerable magnitude. It amounts to little more than this: Kitty Tailleux is a sort of English *Dame aux Camélias*, who is spending a few weeks in a fashionable hotel at an English seaside resort. Owing to the absence of the man whose pocket-book pays her bills, it is not strange that a clean-souled, big-hearted, honorable nature such as Robert Lucy, meeting her in the casual way in which one meets fellow-guests at a hotel, should mistake her for what she is not; and, supplementing his mistake by a graver one, should fall in love with her and ask her to be his wife and a second mother to his orphan child. Kitty Tailleux is not in the least an idealized character; she is quite frankly pictured with the faults and limitations of her class—the love of show, the thirst for admiration, the insincerity, the imperious craving for emotions. But it happens that for the first time in her life she has learned the meaning of an honest, disinterested love. Had she not loved Robert Lucy she would have run the risk of future discovery; but because of this love she cannot bring herself to conceal her unworthiness from him. And after

she has owned the truth and he has decided that for his child's sake, if not for his own, marriage between them is impossible, she not only acquiesces in his verdict, but adds to it by the supreme sacrifice of her "immortal moment," the seal of finality that comes with death. But the art of this story depends far less upon the substance than upon the manner of the telling. Throughout the greater portion of it the reader knows no more than the man who loves her what manner of woman she is. We hear the current gossip of the hotel corridors, the jealous slurs of women, the over-bold admiration of men, the stanch support of the few who really like her. In other words, the reader is placed in a position to see Kitty Tailleure from the standpoint of Robert Lucy and to hear and surmise what Robert Lucy might have heard and surmised—with this advantage, however, that the average reader is somewhat more worldly-wise than Mr. Lucy, and therefore in a position to discover for himself the truth which the lover scarcely credits, even after hearing it with brutal frankness from the woman's own lips.

Yet nothing that has been said in the preceding pages alters the fact that Miss Sinclair first became a figure of importance in contemporary fiction upon the appearance of *The Divine Fire*, and that without it her importance to-day would be, if not negligible, at least greatly diminished. In that

one book at least she arose to rare heights. It is one of those big, many-sided, kaleidoscopic books which paint metropolitan life, the good and the bad together, with bold, sweeping brush-strokes,—the sort of book which it is almost as hard for a woman to achieve as it is for a woman to compose a symphony. The impression that you bring away from *The Divine Fire* is, first of all, an impression of a multitude of human beings, and at the same time not an impression of a crowd,—because, in a crowd, few faces stand out distinct from the rest, while in *The Divine Fire* there is a host of faces, every one of which you recognize because they are so carefully and admirably individualized. The picture is painted on a wide canvas; and there is no mistaking the assured touch with which the seamy side of journalistic and Bohemian London are flung before us. It is the London of Grub Street and Torrington Square; the London of newspaper and magazine offices, of old bookshops and second-rate lodging houses, of cheap theaters and cheaper music halls. Back of this tawdry and penurious under-world we glimpse, faintly at first, then more and more clearly, paths leading upward and onward, into the clearer, more spacious realm of art and letters, fame and fortune. More specifically, the book is the life history of two men; the one, an impeccable classicist, a stern, uncompromising censor of public taste in literature and

art; the other, a man lacking in breeding, in culture, in all the essentials of a gentleman and a scholar, but endowed with one heaven-born gift, the gift of poetry,—and the history of these two lives is, on the one hand, the sale of a birthright for a mess of pottage, and on the other, the apotheosis of a poet. Savage Keith Rickman is a true Cockney in every bone and fiber; he was born and bred amid the dust of old books; and even the classical course in the University of London could not eradicate certain vulgarisms of habit and speech and manner, could not make him certain of putting his aitches unerringly in the right place. Furthermore, he is handicapped by an instinct for sharp bargains, inherited from his trickster father, old Isaac Rickman. In short, he is not a gentleman, in the accepted meaning of the term,—but whether he is something a little less than a gentleman, or something a little more, is a question which those who know him best are not in undue haste to answer. Curiously enough, in the soul of this apparently insignificant Cockney clerk a spark of the divine flame is smoldering. It has already flared up once or twice, in a burst that is almost genius in certain audacious *Saturnalia*, and in the opening acts of a wonderful symbolic drama, *Helen in Leuce*. Yet the flame, even at its brightest, has not as yet leaped very high above the earth. His Cockney streak is still uppermost; he

looks upon the throngs of women, who nightly frequent Piccadilly Circus, abstractedly as "a luminous, passionate nocturne of the streets"; his ideal of womanhood has not risen above the level of Poppy Grace, a very ordinary little variety actress, who has sung her way into popular favor with cheap music hall ditties, and twirls blithely on twinkling toes. Young Rickman makes her acquaintance through the informal medium of adjoining balconies; and the nature of their friendship is conveyed in terms which, although euphemistic, are unmistakable. But a momentous day comes when Rickman is sent into the country to catalogue and appraise a priceless old library, which his father, through unscrupulous dealings, is about to acquire for a mere song. Until he arrives at the old hall, he has never heard of the existence of Lucia Harden, whose father owns the library; nor has he been aware of the peculiar complication regarding the library itself. Lucia is one of those rare women with a love for books, and a passion for classic learning. It is her own idea to have this library catalogued, and she means to pay the cost out of certain private funds, and have the catalogue ready as a surprise for her father, when he returns from the Continent. But it happens that Sir Frederick Harden, unknown to his daughter, has lost a very substantial part of his fortune at Monte Carlo,

and has mortgaged his library for less than quarter its value, and old Isaac Rickman has secured an option from the mortgagee. Now, Lucia Harden, beautiful, cultured, and of fine old race, is the first good, pure woman that Keith Rickman has ever known, and she dawns upon his bewildered senses as a herald of a new life, an inspiration that will lead him upward to heights unguessed. Had he been a gentleman, instead of something less,—or something more,—Rickman would have known at once the impossibility of remaining at Harden Hall, working day and night, side by side with Lucia Harden, and aware all the time that he is in a certain sense helping to defraud her. When he finally does realize what his duty is, and prepares to tell her the truth, he is too late; her father has died suddenly, at Cannes, the mortgage has been foreclosed, and the Harden library has passed into the greedy grasp of Rickman the elder. This sequence of events, bringing with them a temporary belief on the part of Lucia Harden that Keith has been guilty of unpardonable duplicity, although it causes a long estrangement between them, is the beginning of the poet's regeneration, his emancipation from his bondage, his gradual conquest over heredity and environment and his earlier self. The first step is his permanent break with his father, his departure from the classical section of the old book shop, where he has so long

been a familiar figure, and his appraisal accepted as the final word. Instead, he enters on the precarious path of journalism, picking up a pittance here and there for a sonnet, an editorial, a paragraph of criticism, and emigrating from second floor front to third floor back, thence to a garret, and then back again to second, in accordance with the weekly ebb and flow of fortune.

Meanwhile there is a second leading figure in the book, who is glimpsed but seldom during the earlier chapters, because his social position makes him a stranger to the sphere in which Rickman has hitherto moved. Horace Jewdwine is an Oxford Don, developing into a London journalist. "You divined that the process would be slow; there was no unseemly haste about Jewdwine." Academic is a pale, inefficient word to apply to Jewdwine, to his critical taste, to his manner of speech, his written prose. He exhales the higher culture as he moves; his conversation is as formally classic as an Elgin marble. His highest ambition is to found a review of literature and art that shall be impeccable, the recognized court of last resort in criticism. Now, it happens that Jewdwine is own cousin of Lucia Harden, that he dreams in a vague, noncommittal way of one day marrying her, provided he can bring himself to sacrifice his bachelor freedom; and meanwhile, being aware of Rickman's interest in Lucia and of their tem-

porary estrangement, it suits his purpose to manœuvre to keep them apart and to salve his own conscience by offering Rickman the position of sub-editor on his newly founded review, *The Museion*. To trace the subsequent steps by which the Cockney poet climbs upward and onward, sacrificing one worldly prospect after another, in his one fixed purpose to refine the pure gold of his own soul, to redeem his honor, and through slaving drudgery, sickness and starvation, win back the library he was instrumental in helping to steal, and lay it at Lucia Harden's feet as a tangible evidence of atonement,—to tell all this in detail would mean to rewrite inadequately a story already so superbly written that one reads it with an eagerness that is almost pain, all unconscious of its most unusual and formidable length. And Jewdwine, too, and his slow but inevitable degeneration, form a chapter too extensive to epitomize in detail. Here again is a superb piece of work,—merciless, too, in the incisive irony of the picture it draws of a man's self-deception, his almost unconscious yielding to the pressure of expediency, until he is almost the only person left who is unaware that his review is hopelessly commercialized and his own critical opinions a marketable commodity. And in the end, when he looks into his own soul and awakes to a realization of its pettiness, he has not manhood enough left to be

generous and wish his rival god-speed in his wooing of the woman Jewdwine has forever lost,—but instead he must play a dog-in-the-manger's part, and by a dastardly trick try to block the marriage between Keith and Lucia, a trick that falls to the ground and sputters out impotently, because the poet's soul has reached that rare height in which love is refined of all dross and self is obliterated. These are some of the things that Miss Sinclair has achieved in this rather wonderful book. And she has done one thing more,—and as a sheer matter of craftsmanship, the most wonderful of all; she has shown us a genius, one of the finest and rarest sort, and she has convinced us that he is all she claims for him; she has succeeded in making him plausible, she has even ventured upon the supreme audacity of showing us fugitive specimens of his verse, and yet escapes an anti-climax. Savage Keith Rickman lives so firmly in our memory as an English poet of the first magnitude that it would not be at all surprising, indeed, it would seem in a way a merited tribute to the novelist's genius, if more than one absent-minded reader should search for the name of Rickman in anthologies of English verse.

These are the reasons why it is difficult to discuss Miss Sinclair's other volumes more than half-heartedly, why it has seemed best to omit some of them altogether from discussion. They suffer too

much from contrast. One by one, they add their cumulative evidence to the growing conviction that *The Divine Fire* is likely to enjoy permanently its isolated splendor among Miss Sinclair's contributions to fiction.

ALFRED OLLIVANT

WITH the single and obvious exception of Mr. Kipling, it would be difficult to cite any other contemporary writer of English fiction who has attained such striking success as that of Mr. Alfred Ollivant in three forms of endeavor differing so widely as those represented severally by *Bob, Son of Battle*, *Redcoat Captain* and *The Gentleman*. To the host of friends whom he won by his strong and tender story of a dog who was a gentleman if a dog ever was one, it began to seem, as the years went by, that Mr. Ollivant was destined to be numbered among the authors of a single book. And when a few years later a second dog story, *Danny*, was barely given to the public before being withdrawn by the author as a piece of work to which he could not give his sanction, the impression was strengthened that he was not likely again to be heard from. Contrary to expectation, after another lengthy silence, he surprised his public by producing within the space of a single year two volumes that, each in its own way, stand very close to the elusive border-line of genius. One other volume, *The Taming of John Blunt*, subse-



ALFRED OLLIVANT

quently found its way into print, and there is still another which, when the day of its publication arrives, is likely to bring its author high commendation as an interpreter of certain humble Cockney types and to win him comparison with analogous works from the pens of De Morgan and Galsworthy.

There are some novelists, probably the majority of those who really count, from whose blunders almost as much may be learned as from their successes. It is possible to look back over their record and to see how, step by step, they learn to outgrow certain failings, to avoid certain errors, to do a particular kind of thing over again, and to do it better. Mr. Ollivant is not one of this class. He can do only the thing which, for the time being, holds him, heart and soul. When he blunders there is no such thing as going back and doing it over. He discards that particular type once for all, and passes on to something new, something in which his past achievements and failures have scant influence one way or the other. For this reason there would be small profit in spending time or space upon the two volumes which are admittedly inferior work. The primary purpose of the present study is to justify the contention that Mr. Ollivant is one of the most original writers of his generation; and the best proof of this lies in the three volumes which are now to be successively ex-

amined and among which it is difficult to award the palm for uniqueness.

Of *Bob, Son of Battle*, very nearly the last word has been said, not once, but many times, by other critics; it is one of those rarely fortunate books regarding which the verdict of criticism and of the general public coincided in giving it very nearly its just due. The animal story, if we include within this term the *Beast Fable*, is a type of fiction which has come down from the unrecorded darkness of antiquity; and through the skilled magic of Mr. Kipling, the type has taken a new lease of life in the *Jungle Books* and the *Just-So Stories*. But in these coldly practical days, when science is ruthlessly elbowing the classics out of our universities, we have learned to make even our animal stories scientific; and we have as a result the tales of Mr. Thompson-Seton, the best of which are zoological monographs, and the worst, good examples of that type of pseudo-psychology popularly known as the nature fake. Besides these two main divisions there is a wide-spread class of novel and short story, in which the chief character is a dog or a horse through whose eyes a certain series of human episodes are witnessed and a certain effect of irony, a certain criticism of life, is gained by accepting the canine or equine point of view. Such books are of all periods and of all degrees of merit, from *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius to Ouida's *Puck*,

from that widely popular piece of sentimentality, *Black Beauty*, to Richard Harding Davis's bit of real artistry, *The Bar Sinister*. And, of course, any one whose reading in fiction has been at all liberal will be able to cite many a story in which some dumb animal has played a more or less significant part. They range all the way from a casual intrusion such as that of Binkie, who was "an omen," in *The Light That Failed*, to Buck, who pretty nearly fills the whole canvas, in *The Call of the Wild*. But even with all these different types clearly in mind, there need be no hesitation in affirming that Mr. Ollivant's *Bob, Son of Battle*, is not merely the best realistic story of animal life, but the only one. While we read it, all others simply do not exist.

The specific story of Owd Bob, the last of the Grey Dogs of Kenmure, and his life-long feud with Red Wullie, the Tailless Tyke, does not lend itself well to a brief retelling. So much of its strength lies in the careful etching-like detail, the soft grays and browns of lowering sky and far-stretching moor; much, also, in the slow, persistent accumulation of traits of character, little miracles of observation that by their progressive upbuilding give birth to a little group of dogs and of men that are perhaps more alive in their material existence of ink and paper, and more likely to go on living, than many another who actually moves and

breathes. Of James Moore, the big, brawny, phlegmatic and long-suffering master of Bob, and of Adam M'Adam, the undersized, shrunken wisp of humanity, with the disposition of a devil in whom there still smolders a spark of tenderness, there is no purpose in speaking here at any length. The whole plot of the book is too thin, too skeleton-like to be set forth at second hand without danger of ruthlessly spoiling it. Viewed dispassionately, apart from the contagious magic of Alfred Ollivant's matchless narrative, the whole thing narrows down to this: We have two sheep-dogs, each a prize-winner because of his peculiar prowess in driving his flock; each hating the other with a hatred controlled only by the respective attitudes of their masters; and little by little the conviction spreads that one of these two dogs has been guilty of the one unpardonable crime a sheep-dog may commit,—that of killing sheep. A matter, you see, of a few throats opened, a few pounds of mutton spoiled for the market in a little jumping-off place on the world's surface; a few farmers out of pocket, and, in the end, a village well rid of a bad dog. But, what Mr. Ollivant has actually done is so vastly different from all this: under his touch the outside world drops away and the spreading acres of farm and pasture under the shadow of the Muir Pike dominate the whole picture. In the personalities of two dogs he has

worked out certain eternal verities; has pictured over again the unending battle between good and evil, fought out in the blackness of night between the immensities of earth and sky. The big scene of the book, in which at last Red Wullie is caught, vampire-like, at his hideous feast, with the shuddering, cowering flock standing as dumb witnesses, and Owd Bob looming up beside him like an avenging fate, is beyond all praise in its tragic simplicity, superbly elemental, almost Homeric. It is no small task to take a couple of dogs and make them stand as symbols for the passions and aspirations of humanity; it is an even greater achievement to take an isolated corner of Christendom, a gray, fog-haunted bit of moorland, and make it the center of the Universe, blotting out the rest,—and these things Mr. Ollivant has achieved with an almost epic dignity.

Of the two books which equally with *Bob, Son of Battle*, merit detailed notice, *Redcoat Captain*, although one of the few really unique volumes which any one decade gives us, is perhaps the less apt to have its singular quality recognized. Indeed, to the indifferent glance of the average reader, the big print of its wide pages, the one-syllable flavor of its dialect, the Mother Goose atmosphere of its illustrations, betokened merely one more attempt to meet the demand for holiday books for children,—and a none too successful at-

tempt it turned out to be, according to the experience of numerous misguided purchasers who found that somehow it failed to reach the intelligence of the kindergarten age. Of course, as a matter of fact, whether Mr. Ollivant himself was precisely aware of it or not, *Redcoat Captain* is not a book for children, but a sort of epitomized philosophy of life, deliberately written in the manner of *Alice in Wonderland* or the *Just-So Stories*; or, to say the same thing in another way, it contains the essence of the wisdom of childhood put up in portable doses for the adult. It is the universal and perennial love story, told with the joyous irresponsibility of *Grimm's Fairy Tales*. It reminds you, as above suggested, of the *Just-So Stories* and the next moment of Mr. Barrie's *Little White Bird*, and then again of no one in the world but Mr. Ollivant himself. A good many readers will doubtless frankly take issue with this opinion and lay the book aside in hopeless bewilderment. Yet the effort to understand its tender symbolism is eminently worth while, not merely because the inherent romance of love and youth has seldom been treated with such freedom from all that is conventional, but because it contains the key to the right of entry into "That Country," the country of those who have learned to remain young in heart and to look upon life with the frank serenity of little children. The book merits a little

patient effort to understand it, and I urgently recommend some effort in its behalf. You will undoubtedly read it at first in a state of dazed incomprehension, telling yourself that if this is a book attuned to the understanding of childhood, you must suddenly have grown very old indeed. You read it a second time, and here and there you catch sudden sunlight flashes of meaning through the prevailing fog of shorthand phrasing; but it takes at least three readings before you fully catch the spirit of it, and realize with a growing delight that Mr. Ollivant has succeeded in saying almost the last word on many of the deepest and tenderest relations of life, and, what is more, saying it in long primer type and a special nursery syntax invented for the occasion.

Who else ever conceived of the possibility of breaking into a love story with the following abruptness: "So, after waiting faithfully for days and days and days, they agreed they could wait no longer"? And who else would ever have had the delicious impudence of summing up the essential details in this stenographic fashion:

She was between ten and twenty; he was a little more.

He was so tall that the Fellows called him Tiny; her name was Mabel, so they called her Baby.

At this point a reviewer suddenly realizes once again the impossibility of measuring Mr. Ollivant's books after the ordinary standard. It is easy, no doubt, to point out many hidden meanings in *Redcoat Captain*, to show that it is an elaborate political satire, a verbal caricature of the British army. But its widest appeal will be exerted as an allegory of the first year of married life. Baby is by no means the first young wife who has tried to "teach-by-tease"; Tiny is by no means the first newly-made husband who has slammed the door and "gone joggle-joggle down the path," and furthermore has added insult to injury by pretending "don't-care-damb." The specimen quarrel which follows in *Redcoat Captain* deserves to be quoted *in extenso*:

Then Baby peeped; and her handkerchief was at her mouth; and she said in a wee voice,

"Back for tea, Tiny?"

So Tiny answered,

"Dunno," and joggled down the path.

Then Baby gasped,

"Hope you will, Tiny-boy!" And she shut the door and ran, because she was taken blubby bad.

And when Tiny heard that, he could *not* bear it any more, for you can't if they keep on at it; and he thought,

"You *are* a darling! I *am* a cad."

And he stopped, and turned, and went back to

the door as though he had his seven league boots on, to say sorry I'm a cad, which he truly was.

But the door was shut.

Then Tiny ran up and down on his feet, and cried at the key-hole,

"Lemme in! lemme in! lemme in! O Baby! I *do* love you! Truly sorry! lemme in!"

But it was too late then.

So Tiny stood outside the door and wished he hadn't. And that is what Adam spent his time doing outside the Gates of Eden. And it is what most of us spend a lot of time doing when it's too late. And it very often isn't till you stand outside and wish you hadn't, that you know how jolly it was inside, before you had.

There you have a characteristic quotation,—it might have been any one of a score of others equally incisive, equally human. For, after all, the quality through which *Redcoat Captain* is destined to live is not that of satire, but rather the whimsical lightness of phrase that veils a deep, underlying seriousness, and makes the mythical kingdom of "That Country" a goal within the reach of all of us, if only we can remember to live with the wise straightforwardness and simplicity of little children.

To a casual glance, it would seem as though no book could be found presenting a greater contrast than Mr. Ollivant's new volume, *The Gentleman*.

Yet, if you study the style, you see very quickly the same tendency toward a sort of literary shorthand, an almost algebraic brevity of word and phrase, which in the hands of this one man is at times startlingly effective, and which at the same time defies imitation, and would become exasperating if clumsily plagiarized. This one point of similarity in style is worth dwelling upon, because there is always a certain interest in tracing the kinship between an author's works; and in this particular case, the kinship lies in style alone,—otherwise, *The Gentleman* stands by itself, a distinctly bigger achievement than either of its author's earlier books; and, one is tempted to add, the book best entitled of any story written in English since the days of Robert Louis Stevenson to trace its ancestry straight back to the purest strain of the romantic novel.

Had he chosen, Mr. Ollivant might have inscribed as sub-title to *The Gentleman* "A Novel Without a Heroine." The shadow of a woman's influence in moulding the destinies of England lies heavily across its canvas, but only men enter into the action of it. It is difficult to recall for the moment any recent volume of importance since Joseph Conrad's *Nigger of the Narcissus* from which the feminine element is so completely eliminated. A two-page preface, in its opening lines,

gives the date, July, 1805, as well as the historical background to the story.

"Succeed, and you command the Irish expedition," said the squat fellow.

"My Emperor!" replied the tall cavalryman, saluted, and clanked away in the gloom.

Regarding the element of true history in this book, it is very doubtful whether any one qualified to appreciate the finest qualities of it will care to raise a question. At least some such thought must have been in Mr. Ollivant's mind when for his closing word he penned, with characteristic brevity, "I will answer no questions about this book." His instinct must have told him that only those prosaic souls who are blind to the spirit of true romance would want to measure him by the dry-as-dust standards of recorded history. It is the hall-mark of the best historical romance, whether it be *Ivanhoe* or *Les Trois Mousquetaires*, *Richard Yea-and-Nay* or *The Gentleman*, that one cares not in the least whether the historic personages within their pages ever had a separate existence in the real world. They exist for this once at least, more vivid, more genuine, more convincingly human than any historic record could ever make them. And whatever statistical history may have to say of Richard I., of Richelieu, of "the man of

'Aboukir Bay,'—there are those of us who will still treasure the pictures drawn by the masters of romance, among whom Mr. Ollivant seems destined to find an abiding place.

Of the details of plot in *The Gentleman* it is not necessary to know more than this: that it concerns an attempt to entrap and capture no less a personage than Nelson himself, through the agency of the woman whom Nelson loves; the discovery of that attempt through a message, hidden in a woman's scent-bottle that is found in a dead man's mouth; and the frustration of the whole scheme at the cost of many valiant lives. What you bring away from the book is not so much a detailed impression of a carefully worked-out plan of campaign by the "Squat Fellow" across the channel, as it is a series of tense, grim, masterful pictures of heroes, indomitably fighting and dying gloriously for a great cause. As an example of literary shorthand,—for there is really no other phrase that serves to define his peculiar power of verbal condensation, his remarkable trick of narrative foreshortening,—*The Gentleman* is quite inimitable. The scenes shift before your eyes with the rapidity of a moving picture; you catch lightning flashes of battle scenes glimpsed through a murk of smoke and fire; a dozen words, the stroke of a pen and the impression has been given. Another penstroke, and you perceive succinct and un-

forgettable the picture of nature's peace, following upon the discord of man: "All was silence and a few pale stars."

But the only adequate way in which to give an impression of the true flavor of the book is by letting it speak for itself in a few rather extended quotations. No one who has described warfare on land or sea, from Smollett, Marryat and Hugo to Tolstoy and Zola, has been free from scenes of horror. Alfred Ollivant is no exception to the rule; there are many pages in *The Gentleman* that set you shuddering. But study the sheer, grim power of a passage like the following, which describes a boy's first impression of what is happening below decks, among the guns of a battleship in action:

The boy dropped into Hell.

Down there was no order. All was howling chaos. Each gun-captain fought his own gun, regardless of the rest. Billows of smoke drifted to and fro; shadowy forms flitted; guns bounded and bellowed; here and there a red glare lit the fog.

Through the shattering roar of the guns, the rending of planks, the scream of round-shot, came the voices of men, dim-seen. Jokes, blasphemies, prayers, groans, issued in nightmare medley from that death-fog. . . .

On mid-deck a shadow was pirouetting madly. Suddenly, it collapsed; and the boy saw it ended at the neck.

A dim figure lolled against an overturned gun. As the lad gazed, it pointed to a puddle beside it.

"That's me," it said with slow and solemn interest.

The boy trod on something in the smoke. A bloody wraith, spread-eagled upon the deck, raised tired eyes to his.

"That's all right, sir," came a whisper. "Don't make no odds. I got all I want." . . .

A shot, screeching past the boy's nose, took his breath away. He staggered back, and brought up against a gun-captain, his shoulders to the breech of the gun.

The man turned with a grin. It was the Gunner, naked to the waist, and smoke-grimed.

"Sweet mess, ain't it?" he coughed. "How d'ye like your first smell o' powder, sir?"

And as a companion picture to this, here is a glimpse of the boy's condition of mind when he first catches the contagion of conflict from his battle-fellows:

Uplifted as a lover, the wine of War drowned his senses. In the glory of doing, he had no thought for the thing done. His was the midsummer madness of slaying. In that singing moment how should he remember the bleak and shuddering autumn of pain, inevitably to follow?—the winter of clammy death?—the March-wind voices of distant women, wailing their mates?

And in contrast with these scenes of carnage, here is one more episode printed as a complete sub-chapter, which will serve the double purpose of illustrating the author's power of pathetic tenderness, as well as his ability to say a wondrous deal in the fewest and simplest words:

The Parson bent.

"*Piper!*" he called low. "*Piper!*"

The old man stirred.

"*D'you know who I am?*"

One great forefinger uplifted and fell.

"*We won through,*" choked the Parson, "*Nelson's safe.*"

The old man's lips parted.

"*Mr. Caryll's brought a message for you from Nelson,*" continued the Parson. "*Kit!*"

The boy bent his lips to the ear of the dying sailor.

"*Piper!*" he cried, his pure boy's voice ringing out fearlessly. "*Nelson—sent—his—love—to—you—his—love.*"

"He can't hear," choked the Parson, "it's no good."

"Hush," said the boy.

He knew the message would take minutes traveling along the dying passages to the brain.

At last, at last it reached.

The old man's face broke into a smile, fair as a winter sunset.

"*Love,*" he whispered, nodded deliberately, and died.

But in attempting to find adequate quotations, one runs up against the very unusual difficulty of choice, because almost every paragraph strikes one on a second reading as almost equally good. Indeed, the more one studies *The Gentleman*, the more the conviction grows that it is one of the very few novels of the first magnitude that the past decade has produced.

In conclusion, a few words seem to be demanded regarding Mr. Ollivant's place in contemporary fiction. It is obvious that he stands outside the current movement, that he has not seriously influenced its trend nor been influenced by it. All that he does bears the unmistakable stamp of originality,—not that commoner, more obvious originality that lies in a clever plot, a new type of character, but that far rarer sort which suggests a personality behind the book bigger and finer than the book itself. It is this pervading sense, as one reads the pages of Mr. Ollivant, of enjoying an hour's intercourse with a man who has thought deeply on many subjects and has reached an absolute independence of view through his own line of reasoning, that gives his books a breadth and depth out of all proportion to their immediate scope and interest. They are not local or ephemeral in their appeal; they have a touch of universality that is the hall-mark of books likely to endure.



MRS. HENRY DUDENEY

MRS. HENRY DUDENEY

THE difficulty that presents itself at the outset of a critical study of Mrs. Henry Dudeney's novels is the simple fact that the majority of them are not of sufficient importance to merit such analysis. The Mrs. Dudeney of recent years, the author of *Robin Brilliant* and *Rachel Lorian*, of *The Orchard Thief* and *The Shoulder-Knot*, might properly be dismissed with a brief paragraph giving her credit for a pleasant style, a pervading readableness, and a keen eye for the importance of seeming trivialities. But it happens that Mrs. Dudeney has had two periods; and in the earlier of the two she produced at least three volumes of very unusual quality, volumes which it is difficult for any one, on whom they have once cast their spell, to appraise in terms of sober moderation. These volumes are *Folly Corner*, *Men of Marlowe's* and *Spindle and Plough*,—and it is to these three books that the present study will be mainly limited.

It is well to bear in mind that whatever is here said by way of generalization regarding Mrs. Dudeney's literary creed and methods of work refers to her earlier period, the period when her

powers of observation were wonderfully alert and her intuitions of character and temperament astonishingly keen. As a novelist she has two claims to consideration. One is her marvelous skill in the presentment of petty details; the other is her insight into the complexities of some of the more uncommon types of feminine nature. In her comprehensive view of life nothing seems to be too obvious or too trivial for mention. She delights in emphasizing the sharp contrast offered everywhere and at all times around us between the things of the spirit and the things of the flesh,—the grotesque incongruity between the stress and storm of inner emotions and the untroubled tenor of the outside physical world. Throughout the crises in her stories she insists upon keeping clearly before us the petty happenings of everyday life,—the distant ring of the blacksmith's hammer, the trivial, empty gossip of good-natured but hopelessly limited village folk, a stranger's chance utterance overheard in a crowd and freighted with unguessed significance, the meaningless words which wink out, letter by letter, in lines of fire as glimpsed from a London 'bus, and serve to symbolize "the weird, the threatening, the unknown."

Regarding Mrs. Dudeney's second claim to attention, it is somewhat difficult to say precisely what one has in mind because of the danger of conveying some subtle half-tone of meaning which may

not be quite the meaning the writer sought to convey. In view of the stigma which seems to attach to the term "sex-problem novel," one hesitates to apply it to such eminently sane, clear-sighted pictures of life as *Folly Corner* and *Spindle and Plough*. Yet the vital and dominant note in both these books, the note which differentiates them sharply from the work of many another careful and able writer, is their delicate yet pervading consciousness of sex. Mrs. Dudeney's literary creed may best be defined as a wholesome realism, the sort of realism which does not go out of its way to search for the unpleasant side of life, but does not ignore or shrink from what it finds in the natural and ordinary course. With the morbid curiosity of certain psychological writers of the Continental school for what is abnormal and perverted, she has nothing in common. She simply recognizes quite frankly the existence of certain basic, elemental facts, and handles them with a fearlessness characteristic of those who live their lives close to nature, who have grown up in the atmosphere of field and farm and delight in the study of nature's methods of growth and of fruition.

In treating the sex element, it is quite unnecessary for a novelist to go to the length of a Zola or a d'Annunzio in order to make us recognize that it is an ever-present factor in the social life

of all times and countries; and that no amount of conventional ignoring or glossing over will alter the fact that it is often a paramount influence in the history of many a normal man or woman; that below an apparently tranquil surface, an unspoken and inexplicable partiality or aversion contains the key to many a life which otherwise would have been lived differently. The great distinction of Mrs. Dudeney's book is her marvelous subtlety in understanding and expounding just such cases of personal attraction and repulsion. Her characters stand forth from the printed page endowed with the breath of life, not because they are better individualized, clearer portraitures, with all their little idiosyncrasies of manner and of taste, but because of their frank consciousness of sex, because she has made them normal, healthy men and women, tingling with vitality, and the joy of living. Her men, at least the men for whom she betrays a personal predilection, are for the most part stalwart, hard-working farmers, of the more prosperous sort, with an atmosphere of the glebe about them; her women are large and built on strong lines, and, if not actually beautiful, are at least good to look upon, and with a suggestion of physical well-being about them. They are none of them of the neurotic, anemic type of Continental fiction. There is not a Magda nor a Hedda Gabler nor a Madame de Burne among

them. They are as far from being spoiled by modern higher education as they are from sinking to the level of mere household drudgery. In short, they are simply types of the average middle-class Englishwoman, with all her qualities and her limitations.

It is in her searching studies of women that Mrs. Dudeney has revealed powers that approach closely to the border-line of genius. Her chief pre-occupation seems to be the conflict which goes on in the heart of a certain type of woman between two opposing instincts,—that of independence and freedom and physical comfort on the one hand, and on the other that of sex and sacrifice and self-surrender. For the most part the type which seems to have interested Mrs. Dudeney, to the exclusion of all others, is that in which the second of these impulses is paramount. Harriott Wicken is a case in point. From the moment that she first met Daniel Darnell, casually met him in a 'bus and scraped an acquaintance as a housemaid might have done, he was the one dominant influence in her life. Here is the way that Mrs. Dudeney gives us a glimpse into the girl's heart in the midst of the honeymoon, multiplying and piling up her luminous little details until we could not help seeing, even against our will:

Her eyes, through the zigzag veil, were fixed hungrily on her husband. She was so happy. There

would no longer be any wrong settings to life. People would be harmonious. She was already beginning to find out that this was only another word for well-bred. Dandie was the keystone of her life. She was unconscious of the thick streak of prig in him. He was so handsome, so well-dressed, so elegant. She loved his drawling, haughty voice. She loved to see him take out his lizard-skin cigar case bound in silver, or his equally dainty and effeminate pocket-book. She used to finger the bottles and caskets in his dressing-bag; she had never come into actual contact with such daintiness before. His trim, golden mustache, well-kept nails, and expression of gentle boredom fascinated and rather awed her. Sometimes she fancied herself quite uncouth and loud by contrast. He was faintly stupid too. She found that restful. She was so full of moods that his even temper and indolent, everyday way of taking life refreshed her. Once she had longed to be clever, to distinguish herself in some way, but now she had learned wisdom; clever people were a great nuisance to every one, and most of all to themselves.

The central interest, however, in *The Maternity of Harriott Wicken*, is less the relations between a particular man and woman than it is a grim problem in heredity, the shadow of retribution which nature exacts from those who break her laws. For generations there has been a taint in the family of Wicken. Intemperance, epilepsy, insanity and crime are some of the forms in which

the taint manifests itself. When Harriott Wicken herself is ushered into the world it is under circumstances as hideous as any author has ever ventured to imagine. The mother, knowing her hour has almost come, has tried to distract her troubled thoughts by reading the columns of a local paper in which are printed the ghastly details of a brutal murder, a young girl of the neighborhood found in a swamp where her assailant had hidden the body after cutting her throat. The experienced old woman who is in attendance upon Mrs. Wicken and has helped to bring more than one child of that name into the world, tries to draw her thoughts away from these morbid horrors, but at this critical moment the husband's heavy, shuffling tread is heard and he lurches into the room and stumbles in a drunken stupor into a chair. It is better to leave Mrs. Dudeney to tell what follows in her own words:

The newspaper which his wife had let slip to the floor attracted his attention. He pounced on it with an uncanny air of glee, turned to the report of the tragedy, stared at it with a wide, vacant smile for a moment, and then, throwing it down, thrust his face forward and gave a laugh. . . . They saw him draw his forefinger across his throat in a curved clean sweep, and then he laughed again.

"Charming girl! Neat job! The fools! They little think that I—how she tore and struggled—like

a tiger! Heavy to drag into cover. My knife—Rosalie!”

And at the end of the chapter Mrs. Dudeney laconically sums up the net results of the tragedy with the brief statement that “upstairs, Mrs. Gatlley was giving a new Wicken, in spite of itself, its first toilette,” and that Rosalie “was growing cold in her bed, her sharp-pointed nose severely outlined, and her eyes—the horror had never gone out of them—closed on an unsatisfactory world.” Harriott is adopted by her mother’s sister and grows up in ignorance of the fact that her father committed suicide on the same night that he was responsible for her mother’s death. It is made very clear that, with the curse of the house of Wicken hanging over her, Harriott has no moral right to marry; but, unfortunately for her, the poor girl is not warned in time. Her child, when born, is outwardly like other children, and as the months go by she is far too engrossed in Dandie, and also too jealous of his pride in the child to be as observant of it as a mother should. It is only when the child is over a year old and is still hairless and toothless, unable to creep or to lisp a syllable and gazes on the world with eyes of dull vacancy, that a chance bit of servants’ gossip enlightens her and reveals the horror she must face. Dandie has meanwhile been called to South

America on business, and is gone altogether eighteen months. Week after week, during his absence, he receives long letters relating in detail the clever sayings and doings of his child; every chance phrase overheard by Harriott from the children in the London streets contributes to the weekly bulletin. And when he returns at last, somewhat unexpectedly, he is a little puzzled to find that his wife has given up their former home, removed to new quarters and dismissed all the old staff of servants. But he quickly forgets his astonishment in delight at the bright, sunny-faced, beautiful little child that calls him "papa" and dances gaily around him. And all the time Harriott is haunted by the last glimpse she had of the pitiful little monstrosity which was none the less her own flesh and blood, and which she had left to the untender ministration of an old hag in a distant country town. Of course, a piece of deception of this sort sooner or later works its own retribution. From the hour when she gave up her child Harriott's torture of defrauded motherhood begins. She hates the innocent usurper with an augmenting hatred, a hatred that she cannot disguise; and she sees that because of it, her husband's love is slipping from her. And then a few crucial events happen in swift succession. The young physician who was an early suitor in the days before she met Dandie and who helped her in

the substitution of the child, sends her a pre-arranged signal; she must come at once if she wishes to see it alive. Throughout the night she and the doctor are together in a lonely cottage waging a winning battle against pneumonia, and by morning the useless little life is saved. But gossip travels quickly, and Dandie learns that his wife and the doctor have met clandestinely. It would have been interesting to learn what, in Mrs. Dudeney's opinion, would have been the attitude of a man like Dandie if he had learned of the deception practised on him by his wife. But this he was destined not to do. It was easier for Harriott to let him believe the worst about her, to pass out of his life, to bury herself and her idiot child in the isolation of the old country house which had witnessed her own birth and shared so many grim family secrets; and later, when the cold, gray horror of her exile became unbearable, to end it all by aiding nature to shorten the child's life and promptly follow it herself into the final mystery.

Folly Corner, although it has its grim episodes, is by contrast a blithe and cheerful book. Furthermore, it is easily Mrs. Dudeney's masterpiece. The character of Pamela Crisp, which constitutes the vital interest of the book, is one of which, it may be said, with some confidence, that not one woman in ten will recognize the absolute truth, for she

stands outside the circle of their experience. The casual man is far more likely to recognize the type, while a small masculine minority will inevitably find her fascinating. And yet Pamela is not a girl who may justly be called abnormal. On the surface, she even impresses one as a trifle commonplace. She is a big girl, we are told casually, of twenty-five or less, with gray eyes and fair hair, "a handsome girl in the elementary way which satisfies most men"; she is, moreover, of mercurial temperament, and quick to register slight fluctuations in the emotional barometer, a girl who "can be made happy by a bar of French chocolate and miserable by a shabby bonnet." She is a curious blending of snob and Cockney, with just such a smattering of culture as to take herself and her opinions very seriously; above all, a thoroughly feminine, yet thoroughly cat-like young person, with all a cat's love of a sleek coat and a cozy corner by the fire—and, like a cat, quite guiltless of any sense of gratitude. Such is the obvious, everyday Pamela, the Pamela who was known to the placid, commonplace ladies of Liddlehorn. But, unfortunately for Pamela's peace of mind, there was another side to her nature, an emotional side, which had long lain dormant, and which, when awakened, was a revelation to herself. There were in her nature certain imperious claims of sex,—certain chords of passion ready to respond to the

right man; and the right man had touched them. It makes no difference in the story that Pamela's romance had been an utterly commonplace affair—a mere boarding-house courtship, interrupted by the vulgar accident of her lover's arrest and imprisonment for swindling; the real point of interest lies in the influence exerted over her by this one man—an influence so great that the mere pressure of his hand, the sound of his voice when he called her "Pam," the sight of his name in the daily papers, any material evidence, in short, of his existence, was sufficient to destroy her will power and render her his abject slave. At the opening of the story, however, the prison doors, shutting him from her sight, have partly broken the spell, and her normal love of ease and comfort begins to reassert itself. But the slanting shadow of those prison walls stretches coldly across every page of the book.

Folly Corner has been the abode of the Jaynes ever since the time of the Commonwealth, and every male Jayne has been a Jethro. Mrs. Dudeney evidently believes that destinies are largely decided by the trivialities of life. It was just because the present Jethro Jayne had taken an extra glass of cider on market day, perhaps also because he let his thoughts linger too long upon the demure little ringlets on the waitress's pretty forehead, that he was prompted to indulge in the joke of

advertising for a wife in the Liddlehorn *Herald*. It was equally by chance that a stray copy of this paper found its way to London and fell beneath the eye of Pamela; and because she remembered in a vague way having seen the sheet before, in childhood, her glance strayed down the column of advertisements. Coinciding as it did with her longing to escape from the haunting shadow of the prison, the temptation was too strong, and Pamela answered. The effect of the cider had meanwhile worn off, and Jethro would probably have carried his matrimonial joke no further; but the name Pamela Crisp appealed to him; his mother had been a Crisp; Pamela's father, he learned later, had been called John, the name of his uncle who had run away to sea when a boy. He and Pamela might be cousins; indeed, they must be; and in that way he settled it. It is as Jethro's cousin that Pamela is introduced to all the relatives, at Liddlehorn, and to Jethro's grim old housekeeper, Gainah Toat, who for a score of years has locked in her heart the secret knowledge that had Jethro's father lived but a few weeks longer she would have been mistress and not servant at Folly Corner, and who now sees herself about to be supplanted and shoved aside. The vigor with which Mrs. Dudeney has drawn this character of Gainah is masterly and second only to that of Pamela in interest.

She had a white face; there was a general appearance of wasting about her. Her body was flat and square; her faded gown made no pretense of showing the defect; it went straight from her stringy throat to her hardly perceptible lips without a break, without a kindly fold or tuck of the stuff.

Gainah is a woman whose life "had been one long flurry of immaculate housekeeping"; whose naturally fierce passions had found their only outlet in feverish activity, and now that she finds herself superseded, the transformation which goes on in her dull mind is admirably developed, although quite subservient to the central theme of the story.

So Pamela comes to be installed at Folly Corner; and fits into the niche offered her, with all the complacency of a homeless cat. The weeks slip by, Jethro's matter-of-fact courtship progresses, the wedding day is set,—apparently nothing stands in the way of their happiness. Suddenly her lover, Edred, reappears, having been let out before his time on a ticket-of-leave. At the sound of his voice Pamela becomes like wax; he is introduced to Jethro as her brother, and in the end manages to extort from the latter enough money to take him to London and start him on a new series of swindling schemes.

From this point begins the real interest of the story,—Pamela's intense and prolonged struggle between her miserable passion for Edred and the

life of respectable tranquillity which she sacrifices for him. The end is inevitable,—she follows him to London, and after some demurring on his part they are married. Yet it is all in vain that Mrs. DudENEY assures us that Pamela was “fiercely respectable”; we know well enough that even if Edred had insisted upon dispensing with the ceremony, Pamela would nevertheless have remained with him; all that he needed to do was call her “Pam,” or “good little girl,” in his half-sneering, half-caressing voice. Under any and all conditions she would have taken her chances of “periodic joy and black misery” with Edred.

About those marvelous chapters regarding Pamela’s life with Edred, after she learns that there is another woman in his life, and before she learns that this other woman has a prior claim upon him, it is not necessary to say much here; they should be read rather than discussed. But here, as elsewhere, the point of interest is Pamela’s struggle against her own passion, and she is ready to welcome any avenue of release. For a while she thinks that proof of Edred’s infidelity would cure her, and she throws herself into the task of proving it with feverish anxiety, but when she is at last convinced he is untrue her condition is more hopeless than ever:

She despaired of herself, she hadn’t any shame, any self-respect, any modesty,—any of those cold,

praiseworthy qualities which romance has for centuries built up and labeled female character.

In the end Edred dies, and the spell is broken. Pamela marries Jethro,—slow, patient, prosaic Jethro,—and we leave them to the tranquil joys of rural life. Whether Pamela will remain contented with the humdrum round of domesticity is a problem which Mrs. Dudeney wisely left unsolved. Liddlehorn is a remote village, and it is not likely a second Edred will find his way thither to touch the chords of passion. And, even if he should, Mrs. Dudeney wishes us to understand that Pamela is of the type of woman who vibrates in response to just one man and, he being dead, no re-awakening is possible for her. And to take issue with Mrs. Dudeney on this point would lead us too far afield from our subject. But it is perhaps worth while to suggest that in this one particular even so subtle a psychologist as she still has something to learn.

Men of Marlowe's is a collection of miscellaneous short stories, many of them bearing internal evidence of having been written prior to *Folly Corner*; and, in point of fact, they are isolated, unrelated stories, in spite of the pseudo-continuity which their author has sought to give by taking for her setting one of the typical London Inns of Court, like the famous Temple Inn, whose inmates

lead a more or—sometimes—less bachelor life, behind their heavy oaken doors.

A man's oak guards faithfully the story of his life, [she says in a prefatory passage] generations of secrets, of sins, of sorrows, are held by these stout doors,—black and inscrutable, two by two on every landing. The stories those black doors could tell! I wonder they never crack,—with laughter or great, splitting sobs.

There is a good deal of variety in these stories of commonplace people, a good deal of love and jealousy, a crime or two, and a taint of mysticism here and there, as in "Beyond the Gray Gate." The opening tale, "The One in Red," is just the sort of tale which might be expected from a writer who has given us the grim episode of Gainah Toat in *Folly Corner*. Orion was a mean, weak-minded, thoroughly uninteresting sort of person, possessed of neither debts, compromising visitors, nor delicate difficulties; "a mean, drab life," comments Mrs. Dudeney. But he finally puts plenty of color into it, by murdering his aunt, the "one in red," because he was tired of waiting for her fortune,—quite a fruitless crime, as it turns out, because, aside from the confession which conscience and too much whisky lead him to make,—he never would have inherited the money in any case, since she had willed it to some one else.

But the really significant stories in this collection are the ones in which Mrs. Dudeney studies her own sex,—stories like “Why?” or “An Interlude,” or even “Arnold’s Laundress.” Unpleasant they undoubtedly are, even repellent, some readers may think them; for the author has painted her sex in very unflattering colors, and quite unshrinkingly strips off the veil of conventionalities; and all the while we feel their obvious, undeniable truth. Different as they are, her types of women, dark and fair, good and bad, all have this in common; they are all introspective, emotional women, mere bundles of nerves, moods and mutability. For instance, there is Adeline Pray in “Why?” who had married Pray because her first lover could not marry her, and who wore herself out in a few years with remorse and a broken heart, and on her death-bed dictated what her husband thought was her death notice, when it was really meant as a sort of farewell message to her lover. “The dead face tantalized him. The eternal, remorseful tenderness was strong on her lips of steel. There had always been a sprig of rue in her love. Why? that maddening why, never to be answered,”—never, at any rate, by the husband, though there was one room in Marlowe’s whose paneled walls might have told him, if they could have spoken.

After all, however, “An Interlude” is the story

which will best bear a second reading, not only for its own sake, but because it contains, so to speak, the seed thought of *Folly Corner*,—the idea of a young woman who, while knowing all the value of home, tranquillity and the love of an honorable man, is compelled to jeopardize it all for the sake of another man whom she cannot respect, but who possesses that peculiar compelling influence which certain men have over this kind of woman. It may be that the resemblance between the novel and the short story will not strike the average reader; the plot, as a whole, is quite different, and the outward contrast is sharp between Pamela Crisp and dainty, “dressy” little Mrs. Conifer. But the more you study the central theme, the more the resemblance impresses you. The story of “An Interlude” is worth while outlining briefly. Conifer was a stockbroker, whose absorption in his business left him little time to spare for his wife, and she, finding the hours hanging on her hands, fell into the pernicious habit of paying surreptitious visits to Kinsman’s artistic chambers in Marlowe’s, and partaking of the dainty tea which he had ready in her honor. But one evening, by one of those accidents which will happen sooner or later, she encounters at Kinsman’s door Sophia Dominy, the big, flashy brunette from the neighboring mantle shop, who makes clear her own prior claim to Kinsman and sets forth their relative positions in

such very blunt phrases as to bring up before Mrs. Conifer terrifying visions of the divorce court and make an episode which hitherto had been only "delicious, piquant, dangerous,—like a leaf torn out of the *Decameron*," seem both vulgar and wicked. "Mrs. Conifer was a faithful wife again, in every thought, directly she looked into those blazing black eyes and understood." For the next four years, Mrs. Conifer is a model of discretion in every thought and deed, but at last nemesis overtakes her, in the shape of Kinsman, whom the world has meanwhile treated rather roughly, and who, having retained possession of her letters, proceeds systematically to blackmail her. Finally, having bled the woman quite dry, he calls to show the letters to her husband, but is followed and shot on the steps by Sophia Dominy, who has cherished an unreasoning jealousy towards Mrs. Conifer, and who kills herself immediately afterwards. It is some time before Mrs. Conifer can grasp the significance of this event, or realize that she is at last safe,—safe, except for the package of letters in the breast pocket of the dead man lying stretched out on the table downstairs; and the manner in which she nerves herself to creep downstairs, slippers in hand, peel the sheet from Kinsman's face, thrust her hand "heavy with Conifer's jewels," into the dead man's coat and steal her letters, is a bit of description

surpassed only by that of her reaction when she once more gains her own room:

She crept in, looking furtively round the firelit walls. She went over to the hearth, dug the unclean letters fiercely in, and watched them burn. There was a little white frock airing on the guard. She took it up in her hot hands and kissed it. Toys were all over the floor; one, a fur monkey with one eye missing and the other fiery-red, seemed to blink up malignantly—and as if it knew and would one day tell her children. . . . Heavy with shame, thinking of those two—*things*—below, she slipped to the floor and tried to pray—for the souls of the dead and the peace of the living. But her knees stiffened. She stumbled to her feet, moaning. A grotesque memory beat in on her. She remembered the old superstition—that no witch could shed a tear; that this was the witches' most bitter punishment. Well, here was hers. She could not pray. She had sinned, but she had come through the fire. She was faithful to Conifer with a double fervor. She had a high constancy and love which the mere faithful wife, who has never been tempted, cannot attain. Still—she must bear the burden—of an interlude—all her days.

This type of woman, which Mrs. Dudeney has drawn repeatedly with a master touch,—the type of the weak, yielding woman who furtively steals back to the scene of former rendezvous simply because the old, compelling power of a burnt-out

passion is still too strong to be combated,—raises in the mind an insistent question; namely, whether Mrs. Dudeney herself intended it to represent the average normal woman,—whether, in short, she believes that for every woman there exists somewhere in the world a man whose voice possesses that mysterious, compelling power that will make her almost hypnotically do his will. *Spindle and Plough* is an interesting answer to this question and it is emphatically in the negative. In this story Mrs. Dudeney has portrayed the opposite type, the woman largely lacking in what the French conveniently term *temperament*; the woman with a deep-rooted contempt for love and marriage and the male sex in general—a contempt usually based upon ignorance and immaturity.

Shalisha Pilgrim is a big, broad-shouldered, somewhat masculine girl with an innate spirit of freedom and independence,—a girl to whom fresh air and outdoor life are essential and who would stifle in the artificial atmosphere of a London drawing-room. As a child, her ugliness was her mother's despair; as a woman, she has just fallen short of beauty, in spite of her dark, arching brows and her heavy rope of red-gold hair; but she has that rarer charm of expression, which is better and more lasting than any physical loveliness. Intolerant of love and sentiment, Shalisha is by nature qualified for deep devotion. The maternal

instinct, the spirit of self-sacrifice, is highly developed, and she is impelled to lavish it upon something or somebody. So long as her father, an impoverished and invalid artist, was alive, she lavished it on him. After his death she transfers it to her mother, a silly, flighty, Dresden-china little woman, whose mature years in no way interfere with endless flirtations, and whom Shalisha guards jealously from a second marriage, looking with youthful austerity upon the bare possibility as a profanation of her father's memory. Shalisha, driven by her spirit of independence, has undergone the full training course for landscape gardening, and at the opening of the story she has just obtained an excellent situation in the country, through the good offices of her "Godmother Bloss,"—a piece of good fortune which she welcomes chiefly as an opportunity to break off her mother's latest matrimonial entanglement with portly, pompous Mr. Poundsberry, a well-to-do auctioneer, who confuses his aspirates and drinks his tea from the saucer.

At Bramble Bye, Mr. Boylett's estate, Shalisha comes in close personal contact, for the first time in her life, with men,—two men in particular, her employer and Felix Rule, the sheriff. Both of these men, attracted by the novel charm of the girl's freedom, her masculine independence, her unconventionality, soon seek to win her, each in

his own way ; and their attentions vaguely trouble her, although the trouble is not wholly unpleasant to her. Yet so little does she know of matters of the heart that Boylett's proposal takes her un-awares, and what Felix says to her on the eve of his departure for America is said and answered, and he is well on his journey before she grasps the fact that he has offered himself and she has refused him. Boylett she refuses with her eyes wide open. His offer means much to her ; it means a life-long home in the place where she has labored so lovingly ; it means the care of Boylett's orphaned daughter whom Shalisha longs to take under her maternal wing. But the price is too high, because it means also the sacrifice of her freedom, the abandonment of her outdoor life, the necessity of fulfilling a wife's obligations to Boylett,—a man who " is guilty of the effeminacy of a Pullman car " and " talks about the beauties of nature instead of feeling and living them." Besides, deep down in her heart, under the austerity of her unawakened senses, she already knows that, sooner or later, Felix, sensible, plodding English farmer though he is, will return and claim her in spite of herself.

In point of fact, Felix does return,—a transformed Felix, in all the opulence of new raiment, heavy watch-chain and blazing pin, and with the comfortable assurance of a neat little fortune

amassed by honest toil. He makes the mistake of taking Shalisha's consent almost for granted and blurts out his plans to take her away from Bramble Bye, to lavish jewels on her, to transport her to the very life which she has always held in contempt. In his eagerness and impetuosity he gives her no time to collect herself:

He frightened and chilled her. The old disquieting thrill which she had felt before under his touch convulsed her now. She distrusted this joy. It opened the flood-gates of emotion. She didn't want to be stirred. She wanted to lead her celibate, calm life. She wanted nothing tangible. He might love and admire and serve and guard—no more. She experienced an old maid's prudery and cautious retreat. She tried to put a greater distance between them. His eyes, his hands, ardent; his mouth so near that she could feel the hot breath of his hurried breathing—alarmed her. She felt herself to be in a vague way sullied.

He retreated farther than she wished. He seemed to divine the distaste she felt; perhaps it was written on her twitching, averted face.

"What do you want?" he asked, in a voice like a whip.

"I don't know," she returned brokenly.

"Is it possible that a woman can be such a fool?"

This is the way in which Felix came and went a second time; because Shalisha, unlike Pamela, was

not one of those women who sacrifice everything and come at the first careless word of the man they love. She is capable of self-surrender to a high degree; but it must be on her own terms and in her own good time. And when Felix at last comes for a third time, stripped of his fortune and his finery, hungry and in rags, and she takes him in and gives him a prodigal's welcome, one feels that the great devotion of which she is capable and which has at last found a permanent object upon which to spend itself has even now far more of the maternal in its nature than it has of the compelling force of true passion.

That there are volumes among Mrs. Dudeney's later works that are not devoid of interest, it would be foolish to deny. There is *The Battle of the Weak*, telling how a young woman keeps her promise to marry a staid country doctor, although her heart is full of love for another man, a wild, reckless sailor; how the sailor goes to sea, and the years pass, and a child is born to her, which, although its features are those of its father, yet in voice and a hundred tricks of manner day by day recalls to all who see it the untamed, roving sailor who had filled its mother's thoughts. Then there is *Rachel Lorian*, the tragedy of a young woman, whose husband, on the first day of their honeymoon, is dragged from under the crumpled wreckage of a railway carriage, hopelessly paralyzed,

yet likely to live out the average allotted span of years. And still again, there is *The Wise Woods*, with its half-civilized, half-gipsy heroine, and the ineffectual, dilettante hero, with whom she is mated, and its pervading scent of growing things, and the music of nature. Undoubtedly, Mrs. Dudeney has become a trained story teller of the second-class, and can be trusted to maintain a fair average quality. But there was once a brief period when she was more than a story teller; when certain aspects of life gripped her with an almost fierce interest; when certain ideas clamored for utterance, and in just two or three books found utterance,—books throbbing with the poignancy of life, that deserve to be saved from the forgottenness towards which they are drifting. They were obviously the product of young years, when physical perceptions were keener, when joys and sorrows loomed up bigger, when every budding leaf and opening flower were fraught with momentous possibilities. It is given to comparatively few writers, even for a few short years, to sense life so deeply and so understandingly. And that is why Mrs. Dudeney's name is not out of place in a volume on the modern story tellers of England.

JOHN TREVENA

THIS is an unpropitious hour in which to take a comprehensive view of the past achievements and future promise of the author of *Furze the Cruel*. From his first book he revealed himself as one of those favored writers who are sure of themselves, of their powers, of their goal, and move steadily forward, each new volume adding another milestone on the road to fame. But suddenly he seems to have lost his path, to have taken the wrong turning, like a traveler lured to disaster by the lying glamour of a mirage. His latest volume, *Bracken*, suggests nothing so much as the futile violence of nightmare-ridden sleep. What it may lead to when the sleeper wakes, what new forms of symmetry and beauty lurk in the chaos of his present mood, it is idle to speculate. But the net impression left by the volume's mad mysticism is that John Trevena has, like his own creation, Pen-doggat, forced his way into so dense and impenetrable a tangle that to return to his former road or struggle through to a new one is equally impracticable. And this is really a pity, because his earlier volumes, few as they are, have won him



JOHN TREVENA

a merited recognition as one of that younger group of English novelists who can hardly be omitted when mention is made of Galsworthy and Bennett, Locke and Snaith and Leonard Merrick,—one, it may be added, who has brought a new spirit and a new strength into the literature of Dartmoor.

Concerning the life history and the personality of this writer, who chooses to sign himself "John Trevena," only a few scant details have passed into general knowledge; but these few constitute all that is really essential to an understanding of his work. We need only to remember that he is a bachelor, somewhat under forty years of age, that ill-health has been his lot for the greater part of this period, and that he finally learned that the smoky, tainted air of English towns acted upon him as a slow poison. Dartmoor, with its high altitudes, its level, wind-swept stretches, offered a chance for recovery; and there, for several years, John Trevena has been living in voluntary exile in a little isolated cabin, doing all of the manual work, unaided, drawing in, day by day, deep draughts of health, in his endless wanderings over the moors, and finding an inexhaustible source of entertainment in studying the curiously warped and stunted types of humanity produced by nature's struggle for survival. Quite naturally, he has come to love each aspect of the land which has given him back his health, each varying phase

of its rugged scenery, each change of tone and color from season to season, in sunshine and in rain. And it is not surprising that this love of the land should be mirrored back in his books, with an artist's enthusiasm, an artist's sureness of brush-stroke and truth of color. And it was also to be foreseen that the people of the moors would go into his books just as he sees them, with an uncompromising literalness of detail that might well give offense—and that, as a matter of fact, has once at least so far antagonized his neighbors that he was forced to change his residence with undignified haste, and find lodgment in a new and distant locality.

All this is of genuine interest, not as personal gossip, but as the underlying explanation of his novels in substance, in spirit and in technique. It is only natural that he should challenge comparison with Mr. Eden Phillpotts, since their fields of activity so largely intersect. There is in each that same artistic sense of landscape beauty, of the wonderful softness of nature, seen through a shimmering haze of English sunshine, or a slanting veil of English rain. But when it comes to the human life in the stories, one feels at once how radically far apart these two authors really are. Both of them picture a phase of the English peasantry, a people who live their lives in closest touch with the soil to which they were born, be-

cause they do not know, and never can know, any other life. And both Mr. Phillpotts and Mr. Trevena have studied their people closely and faithfully, without delusion and without malice; the portraiture of each is a fine example of honest and unsparing realism. And yet the difference between these two authors is fundamental, because it is the difference of their point of view. Mr. Phillpotts identifies himself with the people of whom he writes. He and his characters and his readers are all held together in one big, universal bond of understanding and pity. His very titles symbolize his indulgent attitude. The people to him are *Children of the Mist*—not abnormal, not wicked, but simply immature; the very land on which they toil out their narrow lives is *The Good Red Earth*. John Trevena, on the contrary, remains always an alien. The natives are always to him objects of special study, but rather in the spirit with which a botanist studies a new species of lichen than with any sense of the brotherhood of man. This is not intended to imply that Mr. Trevena's people are lacking in individuality. On the contrary, they are intensely, often painfully, alive. It is not too much to say that one actually suffers more over the unconscious cruelty of nature and the inhumanity of man in Mr. Trevena's pages than in any of the more sympathetic pictures of life that Mr. Phillpotts has given us. But this does not alter

the fact that Mr. Trevena's attitude is quite indifferently objective; he is not the compassionate Samaritan, but the vivisectionist, finding an absorbing interest even in suffering and disease and death. His whole attitude toward the people of the moors is well summed up in a single paragraph from the strongest and best of his four books, *Furze the Cruel*:

There is not a person living who has not done an act of cruelty. It is impossible to refrain from it. . . . Upon a wild upland passions are fiercer, just as physical strength is greater. Tender lilies would not live upon the moor, and there is no use looking for them. They are down in the valleys. Upon the moor, there is the granite, the spiny gorse, the rugged heather. It is no use looking for the qualities of the lily in those men who are made of the granite, the gorse and the heather.

It is not surprising, in view of this confessed attitude, that there is a vein of cruelty running through all of Mr. Trevena's books; characters grown inhuman from greed, like Pendoggat in *Furze the Cruel*, inhuman from fanaticism like Uncle Gifford in *Heather*. One recalls a long haunting sequence of pitiful figures, derelicts of humanity, misshapen and stunted, eking out starving lives with the toil of raw and bleeding fingers. And yet, the net impression left behind by John

Trevena's books is that of high ideals, fine, clean living and the wholesome tonic of pure air and heaven-sent sunshine. And one naturally asks by what means he achieves this paradox.

The answer is quite simple. Mr. Trevena in writing his books is like a gardener who, having found a fair and sunny garden, elects to raise in it certain rare blossoms, refusing to be troubled by the unsightliness of mold and compost, of grubs and earthworms in the soil. It may be said, without unfairness, that his separate volumes practically all conform to a certain simple formula. There is always a man from the outside world, an alien like the author himself; and there is always some woman who, if not actually from the outside world, is by birth or training not wholly of the moor. Sometimes the man is a transient visitor like Aubrey Bellamy, in *Furze the Cruel*, who loves and wins Boodles, the beautiful, nameless waif of unknown parentage; or Brian Challacombe, in *Arminel of the West*, who follows the line of least resistance, and thinks lightly of woman's honor until he meets Arminel Zaple, strong and pure as the moorland wind, and wise with some years of outside schooling. Or again, the man is living in self-imposed exile, after the fashion of Mr. Trevena, himself, like John Burrough in *A Pixy in Petticoats*, companionless save for Peter, Prince o' Cats, until Beatrice Pentreath

comes elusively and tantalizingly into his life; or George Brunacombe, in *Heather*, with only Bubo, the owl, to share his loneliness, until he brings home Winnie Shazell to nurse her back to health and give the lie to the physician's pronouncement that she is doomed. In all four novels, what one lingers over while reading and is glad to evoke afterwards in memory is the series of pictures of a man and a woman glad because they are young, because they are together, because they are drinking in new health and new hope, far away from the grime and smoke of towns, the physical and moral uncleanness of crowded humanity, and enjoying the splendid freedom of spacious reaches of rugged land and open sky.

It would be unjust to imply that these four volumes are of uniform merit. On the contrary, John Trevena showed in them a steady growth which promised well for his future work. With each volume, he became a little closer in touch with his materials, a little more conscious of the importance of careful construction and technique. *A Pixy in Petticoats* is easily the most haphazard of his volumes, the one that shifts its key most unexpectedly, the one that depends most largely upon the element of chance. For three-quarters of its length it is a mere light and elusive love tale; then suddenly comes calamity out of a clear sky, and a painful psychological problem is thrust

forward;—what effect will the discovery that a man is hideously disfigured for life have upon a woman whose love for him began largely in admiration of his good looks? And, after all, this problem is not solved because chance again intervenes to end it brutally with the man's death.

Arminel of the West shows already an advance, a growing interest in more serious and widespread problems. The central idea is the fallacy of the sheltered life form of education. More specifically, the theme of *Arminel of the West* is the entanglement of a certain Brian Challacombe, a stranger who comes to the moors for his health, in the lives of two girls of the district—Nona Wistman, the daughter of a highly cultivated but fanatical preacher; and Arminel, the illegitimate child of a certain Dartmoor John, a peddler of oil, with a small holding of land on the moors that he has acquired, not by ancestral right, as other commoners do, but by craft and guile. By birth and breeding and opportunities in life, Nona should have been a fine, clean-souled, cultured type of girl, and Arminel an underbred, bold-mannered upstart. Mr. Trevena, however, evidently has his own very excellent theories about the evils of the "sheltered life" method of education. The fanatical Mr. Wistman has chosen to bring up his daughter in fundamental ignorance of the primary physiological facts of life; with-

out consulting her wishes, her temperament, her mental and physical needs, he predestines her to a life in the cloister; and when she comes to him, full of the irrepressible enthusiasms of youth, the tumultuous joy of living, to ask him questions that arise naturally and spontaneously to her lips, and to demand some share of the freedom and privileges that are freely accorded to other girls, he puts her off with subterfuges and lies. Arminel, on the other hand, growing up haphazard to run wild like the Dartmoor furze and glean a knowledge of life as she will, develops, like the furze, strong and sturdy, with an inborn power of self-protection, a sharpness of tongue and prickliness of manner that will keep off an unwelcome touch. Yet, because of this free untrammelled life, she has grown up brave and true and tender-hearted within, a creature whom people come to love in spite of prejudice. While Nona, on the other hand, because of her repressed life, is full of a spirit of revolt, ready at a touch to blaze out into defiance of all laws, human and divine. These are the reasons why, when Brian Challacombe comes to Dartmoor, he can win Nona without the asking and with no saving ceremony of the church, while Arminel he can hardly win at all, though he asks in all humbleness and with every honorable intent. But Challacombe is a weakling, morally as well as physically; and, although Arminel has flourished

under adversity, growing stronger and sweeter, like the heather itself under the storm and stress of sweeping winds, not even her hardly won love can inspire him to a true manliness. We leave him wavering, temporizing, impotently seeking, when too late, to do what is fair and right, and confronted on the one hand by an angry father, demanding that he shall make the daughter the tardy reparation of marriage, and on the other by the lawful claims of the other girl, whom he has secretly wedded yet does not dare openly to acknowledge, because of her lowly origin. In spite of its big advance upon *A Pixy in Petticoats*, there is about *Arminel of the West* a certain inconclusiveness which shows the apprentice hand, the failure of the young artist to take his own full measure.

In *Furze the Cruel* and in *Heather and Granite* which followed it, we find the author deliberately undertaking a task of far bigger magnitude, a trilogy of epic sweep in its conception, with a wise and easily comprehended symbolism underlying it. As Mr. Trevena himself explains it, "Almost everywhere on Dartmoor are Furze, Heather and Granite. The Furze seems to suggest Cruelty, the Heather Endurance, and the Granite Strength. The Furze is destroyed by fire, but grows again; the Heather is torn by winds, but blossoms again; the Granite is worn away imperceptibly by the

rain." In these three symbols, he finds typified the dominant traits of the Dartmoor folk, as he has come to know them,—perhaps, also, in a broader way, the traits which everywhere, and at all times, have had the largest share in the molding of society and of nations. And in making a trilogy of these three symbols, he seems to be trying to say that the world is not wholly cruel, nor is the victory always to the strong, nor always to patience and long suffering. But from the blending of these three things, we get a pretty good presentment of real life. In other words, for the purpose of his art, he has chosen to present three contrasted aspects of life, each, taken by itself, a little extreme, a little violent in its effects,—much after the fashion that experimenters in color photography make three separate transparencies, in red, green and violet, neither of them claiming to be quite true to life, but all three producing, when blended, a faithful reproduction of each delicate tint and shadow.

Furze the Cruel, considered in this light, simply as one of a succession of screens through which the finished picture is to be viewed, is not merely a piece of clear-sighted, virile realism; it is in many ways an astonishing book; one may even say, without fear of contradiction, that no other book has succeeded in symbolizing the cruelty of life with such poignant and convincing power, since Frank

Norris first burst upon the world with the crude genius of *McTeague*. *Furze the Cruel* is not a book which profits by a minute analysis of plot. There are a score of tangled threads of destiny, crossing and recrossing, as the threads of destiny always do cross and recross in real life. It is one of those books that are spread over a wide canvas, and give you a sense of crowds and multitudes and clashing interests; there is no one man or woman in it whom you may single out as the central figure; indeed, if half a dozen different readers should make the attempt, they would probably hit upon half a dozen different heroes or heroines, and not be quite satisfied with any one of them. The truth is that the real protagonist of the book is the Furze itself, the incarnate symbol of the spirit of cruelty in nature and in man—it is the Furze that you must think of, first, last and all the time, as you read—the Furze that defies extermination; that, no matter how you hack and dig and burn its roots, springs up again, grim and indomitable; and if the chief characters in the book are morally warped and misshapen, it is because they, too, have sprung from the soil which gives birth to the Furze; and when, in the end, Pendoggat, the cruellest, thorniest man of them all, meets a hideous fate, it is no small tribute to the crude force of the story to say that one feels there is a certain symbolic justice that he should receive his pun-

ishment through the instrumentality of the Furze itself. If for no other reason than for the episode of the fate of Pendoggat, it should take a permanent place in any treatise on the technique of fiction, as an almost unique illustration of the art of making the punishment fit the crime. The hideous picture of Pendoggat, miser, coward, thief, without one tender, redeeming trait, one vestige of a moral sense, caught at last in the very center of a huge clump of burning furze, struggling and writhing in its tangles like a wild beast, torn and scarred by its briars, and finally feeling the blasting breath of the flames roll past to leave him a quivering, blackened, blinded thing, still grasping in his helpless fingers the ashes of the fortune for which he had sinned—this picture in its relentless grimness recalls only one parallel in our recent fiction; that of the death of S. Behrman in *The Octopus*, by Frank Norris, in which the man who for years has robbed others of their rightful profit in wheat, robbed them of land and money and of hope, at last pays a righteous penalty in the black depths of the hold of a freight steamer, slipping and scrambling and writhing through the lingering agony of strangulation under the steady, relentless downpour of unnumbered tons of wheat.

Undoubtedly, *Furze the Cruel* still stands as its author's biggest achievement, just as the first volume in the *Epic of the Wheat* was the biggest

book of Norris, the man with whom it seems inevitable to compare him. They have in common a love of big ideas, recurrent symbols, a dogged insistence that drives home a meaning by suggesting the same thought in many different forms. Also they have in common a soaring fancy, the gift of seeing visions beyond their power to reproduce. Already in *Heather* there is a sense of something wanting; the brutal strength of *Furze the Cruel* would have been out of place, but another kind of strength was needed, and it is not there. *Heather* has a number of commendable qualities, but it is not a strong book. In fact, of all his volumes it is the one which has faded out most rapidly, leaving only the faintest of blurs upon the memory of the present writer. Curiously enough, it called forth, at the time of its appearance, more favorable comment than its predecessor. A possible explanation of this is that in *Heather* we have, in addition to the Dartmoor folk,—who, as a steady diet, eventually weary the mental palate,—the inmates of a sanitarium, people of various grades of society and coming from widely separated corners of England, but all having in common the quality of representing the outside point of view, of making the reader feel that even on the wind-swept moors he is still in touch with the world at large. But to one who reads between the lines, it looks as though the Dartmoor

folk had by this time begun to pall upon Mr. Trevena himself,—and you cannot write entertainingly of what has ceased to interest you.

Granite, the third volume in the trilogy, has not been published in America, and I have not had access to the English edition. It is, of course, not only uncritical but unfair to draw conclusions from so arbitrary and erratic a criterion as the non-placing of American book-rights to an English novel. Yet the failure to publish the third volume of a series, thus leaving the trilogy a dismembered torso, suggests a suspicion that the falling off already apparent in *Heather*, may have been cumulative in *Granite*.

There remains only *Bracken*, which, if it came from an unknown writer, would call for no mention at all, but which, because it represents a strange and regrettable aberration on the part of a man of serious promise, seems to demand a vigorous protest. It possesses the dubious distinction of being the most repulsive book that I have read in many years. In *Furze the Cruel*, Mr. Trevena first gave evidence of a tendency to see and picture life symbolically. But *Bracken* is symbolism running amuck, a weird, creepy, madhouse symbolism, suggestive of things in heaven and earth of which it is not good to dream in any man's philosophy. That the book has a morbid, unclean, uncanny sort of strength it would be idle to deny. There are

single sentences in it that send little shuddering waves of revulsion and dread up and down the spinal column; there are chapters that do not conduce to sleep. Now, the only excuse a writer can offer for inflicting upon his readers a succession of ugly pictures of mental and moral depravity, hypnotic powers abused to evil ends, a whole gamut of sin and sensuality, is that he has some criticism upon life which he can express in this way and in no other,—and furthermore, he must succeed in expressing it clearly. The great and unpardonable fault of *Bracken* is, not that it is unpleasant, but that it fails to be intelligible. The symbolism of the title is simple enough, the trouble does not begin there. *Bracken*, the rank, riotous, rapid-growing fern-plant, sole survivor in England of the carboniferous period, stands as a link with the past, a symbol of the primordial, a reminder of the stability of life on earth, and of the comparatively narrow space that separates the cave man from his brother of to-day. But it is when we penetrate a little beyond the opening chapter, heavy-laden with its title of “Cryptogamous,” and try to follow the mental processes of Jasper Ramridge, staid man of letters who turns astrologer; of Cuthbert Orton, who, from sullen schoolboy, unnaturally wise, becomes materialist, sensualist, whose one cult is himself; of Claud Yalland, contented to live in squalor, so that he may be a

poet; of Theodore Vipont, the simple, rabbit-like little antiquary, with his passion for old pewter and his passion for his only child, Margaret;—that we find ourselves losing our bearings in a fog of words. From a long series of repellent scenes, just a few facts stand out clear: That Margaret Vipont is a sort of female Dr. Jekyll, with three personalities instead of two; that originally the spiritual side of her nature is uppermost, that she is a sensitive, tremulous, frail little creature, moved to emotions that are almost pain, by the song of a bird, the fragrance of a flower; that under the malignant spell of Cuthbert Orton, the spirit vanishes and the flesh awakens, and without warning she becomes a foul-mouthed, vulgar termagant, utterly unmoral, an offense against decency; and that when Jasper Ramridge's stronger influence overmasters that of Cuthbert, both spirit and flesh make way for mind, and Margaret becomes a sexless, soulless thinking machine, without emotion and without mercy, and avenges herself for a ruined life in a way that leaves no record beyond a few transient bubbles in a lonely swamp.

Such are the impressions left by this huge, unwieldy product of misdirected effort. It leaves one asking impotently under what spell Mr. Trevena can have fallen that he should forswear his old creed and fall to worshipping at the

shrines of false gods. It is to be fervently hoped that this is only a temporary aberration. But at least he once gave us *Furze the Cruel*, and he cannot take it from us, even though he should write a score of *Brackens*.

ROBERT HICHENS

It is almost a score of years since Mr. Robert Hichens first sprang into local notoriety through *The Green Carnation*, which set all London buzzing hotly anent the identity of its bold literary and social lampoons. It was just ten years later that he obtained at last an international recognition, with *The Garden of Allah*, in which for the first time, and perhaps for the last, the inherent bigness of his theme and the titanic majesty of his setting shook him out of his studied pose of aloofness and sardonic cynicism, and raised him to unexpected heights. And almost at the close of a second decade, Mr. Hichens visited America, to find himself, for the passing hour, one of the most widely discussed of modern novelists, with his latest novel giving promise of becoming a "best seller," his earlier triumph, *The Garden of Allah*, demanding a second recognition in dramatic form, and he himself receiving the doubtful tribute of full-page interviews in the Sunday supplements. Accordingly, Mr. Hichens seems to be one of the contemporary British story tellers about whom it is distinctly worth while to ask: How much of this



ROBERT HICHENS

popular acclaim is merited on sound literary grounds, and how much of it is not?

Before attempting to answer specifically this natural and legitimate question, it seems profitable to call attention to the treatment which Mr. Hichens has received at the hands of his critics during the past eighteen years as an illuminating example of the average professional reviewer's shortness of memory and lack of prophetic intuition. A glance over the files of the leading English literary reviews leaves the reader amazed at the suavity with which the critics of Mr. Hichens's more recent popular triumphs ignore the many harsh aspersions they cast upon his earlier volumes, and the completeness with which most of them seem to have forgotten their one-time aversion to certain salient features of his style, his technique and his attitude towards life, all of which are just as marked and most of them just as offensive to-day as in the days when he was trying to startle a sated public into attention, by eccentricities like *Flames*, *The Londoners* and *The Slave*.

For, if we examine Mr. Hichens with dispassionate frankness, refusing to be dazzled by those physical and moral mirages of the desert, of which he possesses the incomparable and magic trick, we must realize that, although he has gained immensely in sheer craftsmanship, and although his instinct for the unerring right word has become

surer with practice, his verbal color more brilliantly lavish, his style more fluent and less epigrammatically crystalline, his development has nevertheless been peculiarly homogeneous and consistent. That he has grown, it would be idle to deny; but the growth has been logical, and on certain definite and predestined lines. His gifts, and some of his faults as well, have attained ampler dimensions with the passage of years; but gifts and faults alike, there is scarcely one of them, the seeds of which might not have been found already germinating and taking vigorous root in the now almost forgotten *Green Carnation*. It is worth while, as a bit of pertinent literary history, to call to mind the terms in which Mr. Arthur Waugh first brought this volume to the attention of American readers, in his monthly London letter to the *New York Critic*:

At last London has a sensation. The quiet of the early autumn is broken by the explosion of a genuine bombshell, and every one is rushing to read *The Green Carnation*. . . . It is a satire, brilliant and scintillating, upon the literary and social affectations of the hour; and a more daring, impertinent and altogether clever piece of work has not been produced for many years. . . . The writer remains anonymous and his preference for secrecy is not surprising, for if it is possible for good-humored satire to make enemies, he would scarcely find a friend left. No-

body is spared. Mr. Oscar Wilde is, as the title implies, the principal butt of the brochure, but almost every conspicuous writer and personage is touched to the quick.

From the very nature of its naked and unashamed personalities, this first volume was handled rather gingerly by the reviewers, most of whom were fain to dismiss it, after the euphemistic manner of the *Academy*, as a mere "caricature of an affectation in life and literature, an abnormality, a worship of abstract and scarlet sin, which must by its very nature pass away with the personality that first flaunted it before a wondering, half-attracted, half-revolted world." To-day the unwholesome interest of its theme has passed away like a whiff of foul gas; and in its place remains the interest of the human document, for it shows that the author was even then, just as he is to-day, concerned primarily with the abnormalities of life, seeking by preference the tainted mind, the stunted soul, the pathological body. In spite of a life-long straining after startling effects, Mr. Hichens has no great and original fertility of plot. Many another novelist before him has built stories upon the themes of metempsychosis; of a woman's slavery to the glitter of jewels or to the fool's paradise of opium; of hereditary fires of passion, that betray a bridegroom on his honeymoon into forgetting the marriage service, or a

renegade monk into breaking his vows. Mr. Hichens's distinction lies rather in his special gift for taking world-old problems and modernizing them, warming them over to suit a jaded palate, with a dash of the decadent spirit and a garniture of *Fleurs de Mal*. Any one who has read Henry James's *Ambassadors* must remember the sensations of the mild and scholarly Mr. Strethers during his first afternoon in Chad Newsome's Paris apartment, while he listens to the conversation going on blithely and carelessly around him, and wonders helplessly whether all those well-dressed, well-mannered guests really mean all the unspeakable things that they seem to be uttering, or whether his own mind has suddenly become strangely perverted and is playing him tricks. The episode inevitably comes to mind in connection with Mr. Hichens's novels, for it precisely portrays the impression that, with malice aforethought, he contrives to leave upon the mind of his readers. He seems to delight in bringing them to a sudden full stop, with a gasping protest, "Surely, he never could mean that!"—and then, at the turn of the page, leaving them with a bewildered and shamefaced wonderment how they could have entertained, even for a moment, such outrageously indecent thoughts!

That this is no arbitrary and one-sided view of Robert Hichens, any one may readily convince

himself by merely taking the trouble to glance over the contemporary reviews of his several books. These reviews, with few exceptions, and quite regardless of their favorable or unfavorable tone, form a rich thesaurus of the various English synonyms,—and sometimes the French synonyms as well, when Anglo-Saxon resources run low,—of such words as morbid, neurotic, pathological, decadent, salacious and unclean. It is true that since the appearance of *The Garden of Allah*, less emphasis has been laid upon the unwholesomeness of Mr. Hichens's themes, and more upon the vivid color and scintillating brilliance of his style. It may even be conceded that there is justice in this change, and that, on the whole, his later books are more normal, more human, than his earlier. Nevertheless, the taint persists. There is no escaping the obvious fact that his interest is always in the exceptional, rather than in the average, type. Strange people, bizarre customs, alien skies, men and women vainly struggling against some overmastering obsession, physical disability or mental lesion, a long nightmare procession of the socially and morally unfit,—such, as they mentally file before us, is the impression left by the leading characters of Mr. Hichens's novels.

Now the fault with Mr. Hichens is not too great a frankness about life. It is not that he looks upon the world without illusions, recognizing the

plague-spots of human nature and ruthlessly stripping them bare. A bold, uncompromising handling of hypocrisy and avarice, frailty and vice is one of the canons of the realistic creed. There is more disease and degradation in Zola's *Lourdes* than in all the pages ever penned by the author of *The Black Spaniel*. And the reason why *The Black Spaniel* is an unwholesome book, while *Lourdes* is not, is simply this: That when he has occasion to expose the ugliness of life, Mr. Hichens, unlike Zola, either cannot or will not emulate the purely scientific zeal of the surgeon, dissecting away a diseased tissue. Underneath the surface impersonality of the realist, one discerns a spirit of prying and unwholesome curiosity, gloating over the forbidden and the unclean. "When I am what is called wicked, it is my mood to be evil," are the words that Mr. Hichens puts into the mouth of Reggie Hastings, in *The Green Carnation*. "I must drink absinthe, and hang the night hours with scarlet embroideries; I must have music and the sins that march to music." And, if we are content not to stretch the comparison unduly, these phrases are not a bad characterization of the salient qualities of much of Mr. Hichens's fiction. He, too, is fond of hanging the night hours with scarlet embroideries, of showing us sins that keep pace to sensuous rhythms. Like the French artist, Fromentin, one of Mr. Hichens's forerunners in

discovering and interpreting Algeria, he has suffered from an innate tendency to see what is picturesque, spectacular, even pretty, rather than what is truly great; and, as with Fromentin, Algeria taught him how to do the bigger thing. It was not until he replaced his "scarlet embroideries" with the vast monochrome of the African sky, the tinkle of drawing-room music with the sublimity of desert silence and solitude, that he attained, for once at least, an epic amplitude of canvas and of theme.

As a bold and effective colorist, Mr. Hichens deserves cordial commendation. His skill in vivid pictorial description is beyond dispute. Whether it be a glimpse of a crowded London street, the turquoise blue of Italian sea and sky, or the burning reach of sun-ravished desert, his printed words seem to open up a vista of light and warmth, a moving picture wrought of dissolving and opalescent hues. His colors lack the riotous romanticism of a Théophile Gautier, the wistful melancholy of a Pierre Loti, the frankly pagan sensuousness of a d'Annunzio,—yet he owes something of its varied richness to each of these. It is obvious that he loves color for its own sake,—much as his heroine in *The Slave* loves the gleam of jewels,—and flings it on lavishly, just as he flings on other forms of ornamentation, purely decorative in purpose, with the result that his backgrounds are often crowded

with superfluous and confusing detail. This tendency has grown upon him year by year; it is only in his shorter stories that he has learned the value of restraint. *The Garden of Allah*, *Bella Donna*, *The Fruitful Vine*, one and all would have gained much by a well-advised and ruthless pruning.

There is a popular impression that Mr. Hichens is a writer of uncommon versatility; and when we consider that his themes range from the morphine habit to the transmigration of souls, and his stage settings from a London drawing-room to the Sahara desert, and from the Nile to the Italian lakes, this impression seems at least superficially justified. But when we begin carefully to sift them over and mentally slip each plot into its respective pigeon-hole, we find that, underneath all his shifting scenes and varied topics, Mr. Hichens's interest in life narrows down to just one form of obsession, namely, the study of human imperfection, the analysis of those various lesions in body, mind or soul which, like a flaw in the heart of a gem, brand certain men and women as unfit,—at best, to be classed as eccentrics, and at worst as monstrosities. Viewed from this point, his themes fall naturally under three heads: first, his social satires, or studies of the passing fads, foibles, petty vices and hypocrisies on which the world of fashion smiles indulgently; secondly, certain mental delusions, occult phenomena, psycho-

pathic hallucinations, such as form the underlying idea of stories of *The Black Spaniel* type,—in which each reader must decide for himself whether he is reading an allegory, a diagnosis of a curious form of insanity, or a report to the Society for Psychical Research; and, thirdly,—and to this class belong practically all of Mr. Hichens's later serious novels,—studies in moral depravity, chronic and often incurable maladies of the human soul.

Because of this threefold classification of his stories, it is impracticable to survey Mr. Hichens's writings in anything approaching chronological order. His sardonic enjoyment of the social extravagance of the passing hour is more or less apparent in every book that he writes, and lends sharp characterization to many an unforgettable minor character. Yet the only volume since *The Green Carnation* in which it would be fair to say that social satire is, first, last and all the time, the main issue, is *The Londoners*, in which the pretensions of smart society, the poms and vanities of Mayfair, are, as Mr. Hichens's own sub-title implies, reduced to an absurdity. Of the second class of plots, or those dealing with occultism and pseudo-psychic phenomena of the Jekyll-Hyde order, we have, besides *The Black Spaniel*, a number of weird and fantastic short tales and two novels, *Flames: A London Phantasy*, one of his earliest

efforts, and *The Dweller on the Threshold*, which is one of his most recent. This group of stories represent various degrees of cleverness; but they one and all leave the impression that the author has not put the best of himself into them. They simply are the embodiment of certain fantastic ideas which in hours of perversity happened to riot through his brain, and which later he could not bring himself wholly to reject. There is a loathsome and uncanny horror about a theme like that of *The Black Spaniel*, that obviously fastened leech-like upon the abnormal side of Mr. Hichens's nature and refused to let go its hold. Yet, even in this instance, the strongest of all his occult horror tales, the thing is not quite achieved. By over-insistence upon obvious details, by underestimating the intelligence of his readers and explaining his meaning in words of one syllable, as though to an audience of little children, he defeats his purpose, and destroys the last vestige of plausibility. Mr. Hichens is too much of the earth, earthy; he is far too interested in the frailties and perversions of the flesh, to gain credence when writing of the transmigration of souls or the vagaries of disembodied spirits. Consequently, it is with his third class of stories, serious studies of human delinquency, that we must mainly concern ourselves, in order to take a fair measure of Mr. Hichens, as artist and as student of human nature.

Neither is it worth while to linger over his shorter stories, in any of the three subdivisions. What has so often been said in regard to the collection of Egyptian and Algerian tales that swell the volume containing *The Black Spaniel* to its required three hundred and odd pages, namely, that they were fugitive pages from his note-book for *The Garden of Allah*, applies in the main to most of his shorter efforts. He is essentially a writer of the sustained effort type; and it is consequently only fair to judge him by his full-length volumes. If evidence were needed to support the contention that, other things being equal, he ministers by preference to a mind diseased, then such a collection of tales as *Tongues of Conscience* would furnish fertile illustrations. There is, for instance, the story of the famous painter whose peace of mind is destroyed because he holds himself responsible for having inspired a street urchin with a passion for the sea, and the boy subsequently was drowned; or again, in "The Cry of the Child," we have a young doctor, in whose ears there rings ceaselessly the dying cry of his own child, whom he had cruelly neglected in its last hours; and still again, in "How Love Came to Professor Guildea," we are told how a materialistic man of science becomes subject to the obsession of a degraded spirit,—a hideous bit of morbidity, which might pass for a study in insanity, if the

author had not precluded that explanation by showing us the Professor's parrot offering its crest to the caresses of unseen fingers, and mimicking the endearments of the invisible and loathsome visitant.

But, as it happens, the longer stories are even more to our purpose than the short tales. Already in 1895, his second published volume, *An Imaginative Man*, clearly reveals the author's natural bent. Briefly, it is the story of an intellectual and highly cultivated man who is destitute of natural affections:

He (Denison) had never loved his kind, and never even followed the humane fashion of pretending to love them. . . . It amused him to observe them under circumstances of excitement, terror or pain, in a climax of passion or despair. . . . He liked people when they lost their heads, when they became abnormal. Anything bizarre attracted him abnormally.

This curiously unnatural personage marries a charming and devoted wife, because he chooses to suspect something enigmatic about her. Later, when he is forced to recognize that she is normal and simple and true-hearted, his interest turns to a dislike akin to hatred. Accordingly, he leaves her, and, after amusing himself for a time in Egypt, watching the impotent rebellion of a boy

in the last stages of consumption, he ends his useless career by dashing out his brains against the Sphinx, with which he has perversely become enamored. Among the press-clippings of that period there is one opinion upon which it would be presumptuous to try to improve:

It is a story to remain a splendid monument to unwholesome fancy, a thesaurus of morbid suggestion, which exalts mere vulgar suicide into an intellectual resource of the weary-minded, and degrades the humanity of virtue into mere animal instinct.

As a companion picture to this unnatural man, Mr. Hichens shortly afterwards gave us an equally unnatural woman, in the person of Lady Caryll Allabruth, the heroine of *The Slave*. Lady Caryll is obsessed by one consuming passion, jewels,—by which, of course, Mr. Hichens wishes to symbolize all the futile luxuries for which women, from time immemorial, have sold themselves. She is fortunate in meeting, while still quite young, an Anglicized Oriental of great wealth, who can lavish upon her diamonds, pearls and rubies, who understands her through and through, without one remnant of flattering illusion, and who actually wins her by the dazzling splendor of one huge and matchless emerald. It is her own husband who, in the course of the story, sums her up as follows:

"She was born to live in a harem, petted, as an animal is petted, adorned with jewels as a sultan's favorite is adorned. Such a life would have satisfied her nature. Her soul shines like a jewel and is as hard. . . . A certain class of women has breathed through so long a chain of years a fetid atmosphere, of intellectual selfishness, has sold itself, body, mind and soul, so repeatedly for hard things that glitter, for gold, for diamonds, for the petted slave-girl's joys, that humanity has absolutely dwindled in the race, just as size might dwindle in a race breeding in and in with dwarfs. In Caryll, that dwindling light of humanity has gone out. My wife is not human."

Now, it is extremely convenient for a woman who happens not to be human to have a husband who, although aware of the fact, does not seem to mind; so it was rather unfortunate for Caryll Allabruth that her husband died, ruined by her monomania for jewels. In her poverty, however, Lady Caryll managed to retain the one matchless emerald with which he had won her. This emerald is subsequently stolen; and, since it is the one thing left in life for which she cares, and all other means of recovering it fail, Lady Caryll consents to become the burglar's bride, in order that the emerald's green fires may once more burn upon her breast. All of which, in spite of its melodramatic extravagance, rests upon a foundation of per-

verse and sardonic logic that is eminently characteristic.

The next two volumes, in point of time, while unmistakably expressing the same outlook upon life, show a distinct gain in the direction of sobriety and self-restraint. *Felix* and *The Woman with the Fan*, although neither of them a book of real importance in itself, at least revealed Mr. Hichens as a novelist worth watching for better reasons than merely because he could attract attention with a flow of epigram, as insistent as the cracking of a whip. Moreover, although he had not learned to draw sympathetic characters,—and it is seriously to be questioned whether he ever will learn,—he at least began to get rather nearer the average human level of understanding than in the case of Denison or Lady Caryll. The heroine of *Felix* is not naturally inhuman; she is simply a victim of the drug habit, an unfortunately common and pitiable human weakness, although repulsive and rather nauseating when forced in intimate detail upon our notice. If Mr. Hichens's purpose was to do for the opium habit what Zola did for alcohol in *L'Assommoir*, it is a pity that his misunderstanding of the realistic method has resulted in defeating his object. Zola got his effects by tireless and uncompromising accumulation of facts, flung at us almost defiantly, with no attempt to palliate or to obscure. What his

characters made of these facts, whether they understood them, believed them, acted upon them or not, was all of secondary importance; facts, as nearly as he could get them, were the be-all and the end-all of his novels, their excuse and apology for existence. Mr. Hichens, on the contrary, cannot be frank, even if he wants to be; he always proceeds by indirection. It is so much easier to suggest than to tell plainly an unsavory fact, and then trust the reader's mind to go to greater lengths than the printed page would dare to go! In *Felix* we have probably the best and most extreme case of this method to be found in the whole range of its author's writings. Felix himself is in no wise abnormal; on the contrary, he is just the plain, ordinary variety of young fool, the Kipling type of fool, whose rag and bone happens, to his more complete undoing, to be further complicated with a hypodermic needle. Felix pays a brief visit to Paris, where fate wills it that he shall meet a certain little tailor who in youth had the honor to make Balzac a "pair of trousers without feet," and who initiates Felix into the endless delights of the *Comédie Humaine*. This whole episode of the little tailor stands out luminously against a background of human slime. It is the sort of thing that Mr. W. J. Locke can do so supremely well, a page that might have fluttered loose from *The Belovèd Vagabond*. When the final reckoning of

Mr. Hichens's achievements is to be cast up, this little masterpiece of Balzac's tailor ought to count heavily on the credit side.

As for the story of Felix as a whole, it is undeniably strong,—as strong as escaping sewer gas. Having read the *Comédie Humaine*, Felix flatters himself that human nature holds no secrets from him; he plunges, hot-headed, into the turbulence of London's fast set, men drugged with ambition, women drugged with vanity, with avarice, with opium. There is an all-pervading sense of something unexplained and inexplicable. Felix's inexperience hangs like a heavy veil before our eyes, and we are forced to grope with him, to piece fragments of evidence together, just as he does, and, like him, often to piece them wrong. Especially, out of the other loathsome and unclean horrors, there looms up, as nauseously offensive as some putrescent fungoid growth, a certain corpulent, bloated, blear-eyed little dog, symbolic of human bestiality. The present writer can recall no episode in modern fiction, not even in the audacities of Catulle Mendès, which, after a lapse of some years, still brings back the same sickening qualm of physical illness.

The Woman with the Fan, although not by any means lacking in audacities, came as a welcome contrast to its predecessor. In addition to its odd title, it had a somewhat startling cover design, the

nude figure of a woman apparently going through some sort of a drill with an open fan. This figure, which proves to be a marble statuette known as *Une Danseuse de Tunisie*, plays a rather important part in the development of the story. It is the fan which makes the statuette wicked, one of the characters repeatedly insists; and the thought which is symbolized by the statue is that of the Eternal Feminine degraded by the artificial and the tarnish of mundane life. In applying the symbolism of this statuette to his heroine, Lady Holme, Mr. Hichens seems to have taken a perverse pleasure in confusing right and wrong, idealism and sensuality. Lady Holme's friends constantly identify her with the statuette, and beg her to "throw away her fan," meaning that there is a taint of wickedness about her, and that she is capable of higher things. The facts in the case, however, hardly fit in with this theory. Stripped of its symbolism, the book is a study of the two elements which go to make up human love, the physical attraction and the psychological. Viola Holme is a woman in whom the finer elements of character lie dormant. She is married to a man of the big, athletic, primitive sort, "a slave to every impulse born of passing physical sensations." She knows that of poetry, music, and all the finer things of life he has not, and never will have, the slightest comprehension. She knows, too,

that he loves her only for the surface beauty of her hair, her eyes, her symmetry of face and form, and that if she lost that beauty on the morrow, his love would go with it. And yet she loves him, in spite of his crudeness and his many infidelities, because he satisfies the demands of that side of her nature which is the strongest,—the side which “holds the fan.” Other men, the men who urge her to “throw the fan away,” offer her a different kind of love, because there are times when they see in her eyes and hear in her voice, when she sings morbid little verses from d’Annunzio, the promise of deeper emotions than her husband ever dreamed her capable of. Now, a woman of Viola Holme’s temperament would never voluntarily “throw aside her fan,” and Mr. Hichens is a sufficiently keen judge of women to be aware of it. Nothing short of an accident in which the statuette is broken will accomplish this miracle. So fate is invoked, in the shape of an overturned automobile, and Lady Holme struggles back to consciousness, to find her famous beauty gone forever. In its place is a mere caricature of a human face, a spectacle so repellent that, of all the men who formerly professed to worship the “inner beauty of her soul,” only one has the courage to renew his vows, and he a poor, broken-down inebriate, as sad a wreck as herself. Such, in bare outline, is the story of *The Lady with the Fan*, and each

reader may apply the symbolism to suit himself. A hasty, snap-shot interpretation would be that Lady Holme would have become a better woman, mentally and morally, if she had discarded her coarse-minded husband and replaced him with a lover of more artistic temperament. But such an interpretation would do scant justice to Mr. Hichens's subtlety. The physical and spiritual elements of love, he seems to say, are too curiously intermeshed to be readily separated; there is no love so earthly that it does not get a glimmer of higher things, no love so pure and idyllic that it does not crave some slight concession to the flesh. If she would hold love, the modern woman must be content to remain a little lower than the angels, she must hold to her fan.

In spite of the implied confession of weakness in solving a rather big problem with the unsatisfactory makeshift of an accident, *The Woman with a Fan* is obviously, even now as we look at it in the light of his later achievements, so much bigger and stronger and more vital than all that went before it, that *The Garden of Allah*, when it followed shortly afterwards, ought not to have been the surprise that it actually was. Of this book, the one really big and enduring contribution that Mr. Hichens has made to modern fiction, there is really absurdly little to say. It is so simple, so elemental, so inevitable in all its parts. It may be epitomized

with more brevity than many a short story. There is a certain Trappist monk, Androvsky, who, after twenty years of silent obedience to his order, breaks his vows, escapes from bondage, and, meeting Domini Enfielden, an independent English girl with a lawless strain of gipsy blood in her veins, woos her with a gauche and timid ardor, and carries her off for a mad, fantastic honeymoon into the heart of the African desert. The desert, so says a Moorish proverb, is the Garden of Allah; and here the renegade monk, fleeing from his conscience, with confession ever hovering on his lips, and doubly punished through dread of the anguish awaiting his innocent bride when enlightenment comes to her, finds the solitude too vast, the isolation too terrifying, the imminence of divine wrath too overwhelming to be borne. It drives him back to the haunts of men, even in the face of a premonition that amounts to certainty, that his secret must be laid bare and his short-lived and forbidden joy be ended. Now the theme of a man breaking the holiest vows for the unlawful love of a woman is one of the commonplaces in the history of fiction. It is the majestic simplicity of his materials, the isolation of his man and his woman, the sublimity of his remote, unfathomable background, that combine to raise this exceptional book almost to the epic dignity of the First Fall of Man. As has already been insisted, in connection with each suc-

ceeding book, Mr. Hichens does not possess the faculty of frankness. That Boris Androvsky is a sinner, bearing the burden of an unpardonable and nameless misdeed, is a fact that we grasp almost at the outset; but Mr. Hichens would have been false to his own nature, if he had not, before revealing the secret, forced us to suspect his hero of every known crime against man, nature and God. But suddenly his theme seems to have taken possession of him, to have raised him against his will, perhaps without his knowledge, out of the pettiness and subterfuge that have dwarfed so much of his work, into the full light of truth and sympathy and understanding. In a certain sense, the book seems to have written itself; it is a fantastic piece of word-painting, done with a tropical luxuriance of color, a carnival of Algerian pageantry and African sunshine; and everywhere and all the time, is an all-pervading sense of the mystery, the languor, the thousand blending sights and sounds and scents of the Orient. Long after the final page is turned, you cannot shut out from your eyes the memory of the desert, "with its pale sands and desolate cities, its ethereal mysteries of mirage, its tragic splendors of color, of tempest and of heat"; you cannot forget the throbbing pulsations of burning air, the vast endless monochrome of earth and sky, the primeval tragedy of an erring man and woman, helpless

motes in the glare of universal sunshine, impotently fleeing from an avenging God. It is this one book which entitles Mr. Hichens to a serious consideration among the novelists of to-day. Without it, he could have safely been passed over in silence.

It follows that, in various degrees, all the books that Mr. Hichens has given us since *The Garden of Allah* are in the nature of an anti-climax; and for that reason they may be somewhat briefly and summarily dismissed. One recalls with a certain amount of cordial appreciation another and briefer story of Algeria called *Barbary Sheep*,—a book that owes its charm chiefly to its delicate and almost flawless artistry, and its lack of any pretension to be more than it actually is. Just a bit of idle playing with fire, a young English couple gaining their first glimpse of African life and African temperament; and while the husband spends his days, and sometimes the nights, tirelessly hunting Barbary Sheep, the young wife, restless, unsatisfied, craving excitement, is drifting rashly into an extremely dangerous intimacy with a cultured and suave young Arab, an officer in one of the native regiments. What might so easily have become a tragedy is brought to a safe and final solution by the removal of the Arab from further participation, through his death at the hands of a fanatical dervish. And to the end we have the delicious irony of the utter unconscious-

ness of the phlegmatic English husband, so intent on Barbary Sheep that he passes his wife, where she crouches among the rocks, in the desert moonlight, equally unsuspecting, as he passes, the menace of her Arab lover, and the death-blow that an instant later removes that menace.

Then we have the much overpraised Sicilian story, *The Call of the Blood*, and its stronger and more sanely appraised sequel, *A Spirit in Prison*. Aside from an almost pagan frankness in their unashamed recognition of physical passion, these are conspicuously clean volumes, with little if anything of the author's earlier perversity. The chief weakness in *The Call of the Blood* lies in the unconvincing character of the leading episode, the one upon which the whole structure of the story hinges: namely, the fact that Hermione, the young English wife of Maurice Delarey, feels herself compelled to leave him before their honeymoon in Sicily is half over, in order to hasten to the bedside of Émile Artois, the Frenchman who has long been in love with her, and who is said to be dying. During the brief weeks of her absence, her husband, who has inherited through his grandmother a strain of Sicilian blood, yields to the call of this remote strain and falls under the spell of a young peasant girl's transient beauty, promptly paying the penalty of death at the hands of the peasant girl's kinsmen. Of the true facts of this tragedy

Hermione is never told; she knows only that her husband was drowned, and that she lost some precious weeks of happiness by her absence at the bedside of the Frenchman whom she did not love and who has lived, while the Englishman whom she did love has died. So, believing him to be the perfect type of honor and fidelity, she consecrates herself to lifelong widowhood.

It is at this point that *The Call of the Blood* breaks off, with a young and still beautiful woman wasting her best years in mourning for an unworthy man, while the right man, who knows the truth and might easily win her if he chose to speak, feels that his lips are sealed by his unwillingness to destroy her ideal. *A Spirit in Prison* takes up the story some seventeen years later. The scene is no longer Sicily, but a tiny island in the Bay of Naples, to which the widowed bride retired at the time of her bereavement, to await the birth of her child, and in which she and Vere, the daughter, now a girl of sixteen, still have their home. The Sicilian peasant girl, for whom Hermione's husband proved false to her, also had a child, who is now a sturdy young fisher lad, with eyes that are strangely reminiscent of some one whom Hermione has known, some one in the distant past whom she either cannot or will not name even to herself. Her attention is first called to the fisher lad by the interest that he awakens in her daughter, Vere; for

the girl, by some curious instinct, has recognized the ties of kinship and has made the boy her protégé and comrade. It takes very little time for Artois, who still loves Hermione with patient hopelessness, and for Gaspere, her faithful old servant, to learn the truth about the boy's parentage; and these two men instinctively conspire to keep Hermione in ignorance. But by doing so they unconsciously prolong her suffering; because her spirit is struggling in the prison of delusion, and can win freedom, and with it love and happiness, only through full knowledge of the truth. Altogether, these two volumes make up a strong, clean, tender human story, admirably handled to bring out all the values that the plot contains. It revealed Mr. Hichens as an interpreter of Italian life somewhere midway between Richard Bagot and Marion Crawford, less pedantic than the former, yet lacking the geniality of the creator of *Saracinesca*.

Mr. Hichens might, had he chosen, have gone on indefinitely from this point, doing the fairly innocuous, fairly entertaining sort of story, and letting us little by little forget the days when a new volume from his pen meant an alternate gasp and shudder at the turn of each page. But it is not in his nature to be content with doing the innocuous thing. He insists upon being conspicuous; and if the only way of being conspicuous is to shock a startled world into attention, he stands

ready to do so. Just two more novels demand a passing word: *Bella Donna* and *The Fruitful Vine*. Of these two, the former is of no special importance, either in theme or in detail,—although in its heroine he has created one more unwholesome and abnormal type that lingers in the memory. At the opening of the story, Mrs. Chepstow is summed up as “a great beauty in decline”:

Her day of glory had been fairly long, but now it seemed to be over. She was past forty. She said she was thirty-eight, but she was over forty. Goodness, some say, keeps women fresh. Mrs. Chepstow had tried a great many means of keeping fresh, but she had omitted that.

The facts about Mrs. Chepstow, which Mr. Hichens regards as of moment, are that in the zenith of her youth and beauty she was divorced by her husband; that, having made a failure of one life, she resolved that she would make a success of another; that for a long time she kept men at her feet, ministering to her desires,—and then suddenly, as she approached forty, “the roseate hue faded from her life, and a grayness began to fall over it.” In other words, to catalogue the book roughly, it is one more of the many studies devoted to *L'Automne d'une Femme*. And so, at the opening of the volume, we meet Mrs. Chepstow,

in the consulting-room of a famous specialist, Dr. Meyer Isaacson, confiding to him certain facts about herself, physical, mental and moral facts, which the reader is not allowed to overhear, which the woman herself never alludes to again, but which Mr. Hichens has no intention of allowing the reader to cease for one moment to ponder over, with a more or less prurient curiosity. Incidentally,—and to this extent alone is her confession justified structurally,—it is the memory of what she confided to him that at a crucial hour hurries Dr. Isaacson on a desperate, headlong Odyssey to the Nile, in order to save a friend and keep Mrs. Chepstow from the sin of murder. But all of this is, frankly, rather cheap stuff, and quite unworthy of the author of *The Garden of Allah*. It makes a normal-minded reader somewhat exasperated to see a rather rare talent deliberately misused.

Only one other volume, *The Fruitful Vine*, remains for discussion. The setting is modern Rome, the leading characters two married couple, both English, Sir Theodore Cannyng and his wife, Dolores, Sir Theodore's closest friend, Francis Denzil and his wife Edna—and just one Italian, Cesare Carelli. Cannyng, having lost his first love in a painful tragedy years before, remained unmarried almost until middle age. At the opening of the story Dolores has for ten years

been his wife, but no children have come to them. Whatever regrets he may have felt have remained unspoken; until within a year his whole interest seemed to center in his diplomatic career, first in one European capital, then in another. But when the inheritance of an independent fortune came almost simultaneously with the loss of his great ambition, the Austrian Embassy, in a moment of pique he resigned, and from that time on had more time for thought than was good for him. Finally comes the day when, fresh from a visit to Denzil's home, full of the merriment of children's voices, he catches up his wife's Chinese poodle by the throat and, while the miserable little beast writhes and coughs and blinks, tells her violently: "Look at it! This is all we've got, you and I, to make a home—after ten years!" Dolores is not surprised; she has felt instinctively that sooner or later this outbreak was bound to come. None the less it hurts her—just as every one of his almost daily visits to Denzil's home, blessed with a fruitful vine in place of a barren one, has hurt her. She is not jealous of Edna, Denzil's wife, although she knows that the idle gossip of Rome has settled their relations for them. The Roman world would be incapable of understanding that the attraction might be the children and not the woman. Dolores's troubles, however, are only just beginning. Francis Denzil, husband of "the hap-

piest woman in Rome," is suddenly stricken down with cancer of the larynx, is operated upon and never rallies. His last request is that Sir Theodore will be a second father to his little son—and Sir Theodore promises. From this time onward, Dolores sees less and less of her husband; a vicarious fatherhood has taken possession of him, absorbed him, made him a new man. When the summer comes, he disappoints her regarding her long-cherished plan to visit London, and insists upon taking a villa at Frascati, so as to be near the Denzil children. Then comes a day when Dolores rebels, packs her belongings and goes by herself to Lake Como, to escape the torture of neglect. Meanwhile Roman gossip has been busy in coupling her name with that of another man, that of Cesare Carelli. Since he was a mere boy, Carelli has been faithful to just one woman, the Mancini. But suddenly and quite recently it has become common knowledge that he has definitely broken with her. Why? asks Rome insistently; Romans do not do such things; a man may be untrue to his wife, but a lover remains faithful. There must be some other woman—and Rome is quick to find her in Dolores. As the Countess Boccara tells Dolores to her face, with a malicious little stress on the pronoun: "The rupture happened in the summer, very soon after you left Rome, *cara*." Now it is while Dolores is in hiding at Como, and

just at the crucial moment when the insistent thought has first taken possession of her, "If I could only give Theodore a child!" that Carelli tracks her down—and this is the beginning of the tragedy that the reader at once foresees is inevitable. What actually follows may be put into a dozen words. Dolores does give a child to Sir Theodore—a child of alien parentage—but she never reaps the harvest that she has hoped for, the harvest of reawakened love; because the child costs the mother her life, or rather, not the child, but her own loosened hold upon life itself, due to a loathing of her own deed. As for Carelli, he is truly Italian in his inability to conceive of Dolores's real motive. For love, yes, that he could understand; but for motherhood, never! And when the woman is dead, and the stricken husband is just awakening to his loss, the Italian thinks to square accounts by claiming his child. But his revenge misses fire. His revelation simply results in quickening Sir Theodore's own self-knowledge, and he says at last in all humility: "She was better than I, better than I!"

Such is the story of *The Fruitful Vine*, analyzed as generously and as sympathetically as possible. It is written with extraordinary power, and it is thrown into strong relief against a background of rare richness, the vari-colored background of the Roman world. Of the inherent bigness of his

theme, the pathos of barrenness, the tragedy of a woman who sees her husband's love alienated because she fails to give him sons and daughters, there can be no question:—just as there can be no question that Mr. Hichens has, perhaps unwittingly, done his utmost to debase it. He has given his theme certain perverse twists that put it on a level even lower than that of Elinor Glyn's much-discussed *Three Weeks*. It was cheap workmanship, and not an unworthy plot, that made *Three Weeks* the ephemeral, negligible book that it was. But in *The Fruitful Vine* we are asked to believe that a delicately nurtured, refined and cultivated Englishwoman, who worships her husband, is willing to do him the ultimate, crowning wrong that any wife can do, and foist upon him, as his son and heir, an interloper that has not even the redeeming grace of being a child of love, but one more basely begotten, more purely meretricious than half the nameless waifs that crowd the asylums! And in asking this, he simply insults our intelligence. All his finished craftsmanship cannot make the volume otherwise than futile.

To sum him up in a few words, we have in Mr. Hichens a story teller of much brilliance who has deliberately chosen to prostitute his gifts to the gratification of unhealthy tastes. He has preferred the sensational notoriety of the passing hour to the less flamboyant successes of enduring

worth. He has given us a few books that are fairly innocuous and just one book that deserves to live. And the danger of according the full measure of praise to *The Garden of Allah* lies in this: that by granting its greatness, we may seem by implication to put the stamp of approval on the author's other works, so many of which, unfortunately, are mentally and morally unclean.

“FRANK DANBY”

THE critical comment, both in this country and in England, that has greeted the novels which from time to time have appeared over the signature of “Frank Danby,” has so often been tinged by a prejudiced and illiberal spirit that it seems worth while before proceeding to a detailed examination of her place in fiction, to comment briefly on a form of inconsistency that is only too prevalent among present-day reviewers. A critic, of course, has an inalienable right to choose his own standard, provided he makes that standard clear and adheres to it; he is free to pose as a self-appointed censor of public morals, or he may champion the cause of art for art’s sake, denying the right of morality to intervene. But he must not follow one standard to-day and a different one to-morrow, or he will be as futile as a double-pointed compass. Thanks to the modern spread of cosmopolitanism in letters, there has been a notable diminution of what the author of *Pigs in Clover* calls the “prurient purity of the provincial mind” in the Anglo-Saxon attitude towards the realism of the Continental school. Zola and Maupassant, Suder-



FRANK DANBY

mann and Strindberg and d'Annunzio are accepted very nearly at the valuation of their own countrymen. Yet the same critic who has trained himself to speak glibly of the admirable technique of *La Maison Tellier*, and the powerful symbolism of the *Trionfo della Morte*, suddenly lapses back into the old-time prudery the instant he is confronted with an attempt in English, no matter how well done, to imitate the Continental school. And this is palpably unjust. No one is under any obligation to feign a liking for Flaubert and the Goncourts, Daudet, Huysmans and the various other influences under which such a writer as, let us say, George Moore, acquired his technique and developed his art. But no one has the right to profess admiration for *Sapho* and *Nana* and *La Fille Elisa*, and condemn *The Mummer's Wife* as sordid and unclean.

Mrs. Julia Frankau, who has chosen to differentiate between her various art monographs and her contributions to fiction by publishing the former over her own name and signing the latter with the pseudonym of “Frank Danby,” is emphatically one of the writers who in fairness should be judged by Continental standards. In spirit and in method, the best and biggest of her novels show a breadth of canvas, a sweeping, Zolaesque audacity of theme and phrase, an uncompromising honesty that shock and offend the conventional Anglo-Saxon

mind. In her ability to handle the unsavory facts with an utter absence of self-consciousness, a purely detached and scientific interest in her facts, akin to that of a surgeon at a clinic, she is to be classed, not with the women novelists of England or America, but with that small and widely scattered group of robust and valiant spirits, such as Matilde Serao in Italy, Emilia Pardo Bazán in Spain, the late Amalie Skram in the Far North, Helene Böhlau and Margarete Böhme in Germany, —the last named just beginning to gain the recognition that she so richly deserves. If there is any other woman in England whose work gives promise of similar virile strength and fearlessness, it is the writer who elects to be known to the public as “Richard Dehan,” whose South African novel, *The Dop Doctor*, in spite of many crudities, was full of brilliant promise, and whose new volume, *Between Two Thieves*, is one of the biggest historical novels of the present decade.

But while granting freely to “Frank Danby” her unflinching courage, her clear-eyed understanding of life, her relentless probing after the truth, even though in doing so she opens up the fester-spots of society, one must also admit that she is a sadly uneven craftsman, often handicapped by her lack of self-criticism, and driven to unwise lengths by the violence of her prejudices and a goading impatience at narrow-minded mis-

comprehension. Her scathing contempt of certain classes and racial types, her unsoftened utterances on politics, religion, heredity and the problems of sex abundantly account for the unjust neglect and condemnation that were so largely the portion of her earlier novels. Yet the volumes which show most markedly this spirit of revolt, this determination to speak the truth, regardless of whom it offends, are precisely the volumes that make her an interesting figure in contemporary fiction. They include, notably, *Dr. Phillips*, which created no small sensation in London, upward of twenty years ago, *Pigs in Clover*, which in spite of a faulty structure remains to this day its author's biggest novel, and *The Sphinx's Lawyer*, her most flagrant defiance of public opinion, which nevertheless propounds certain weighty questions that compel thoughtful attention. Since the publication of *The Sphinx's Lawyer* “Frank Danby's” manner has undergone a change. Her later volumes, *The Heart of a Child*, *An Incomplete Etonian*,—known in America under the title of *Sebastian*, even *Joseph in Jeopardy*, which here and there has a flash of the old-time daring, show a spirit of concession. Of these later books, the author might have written what she actually did write of her biography of Lady Hamilton, that “much has been omitted that might offend the susceptibilities of those to whom the truth is less grateful than

delicacy." They are carefully written books, showing her customary wise understanding of human nature, together with a distinct gain in the mechanics of construction; and they are books which are not likely to call forth hostile comments. They may be safely put into the hands of the average reader without fear of ruffling too harshly any pet prejudice,—unless, perhaps, here and there some champion of the suffragette movement may resent the wholesome indorsement of the old-fashioned domestic type of woman, in *Joseph in Jeopardy*. But they lack that ample largeness of view, that forceful singleness of purpose, that exuberant vitality, which, in the case of her earlier books, compelled recognition, even in the face of a storm of protests, as novels of serious importance and big promise.

What has happened to "Frank Danby" is not unlike what happens to a large proportion of successful novelists; yet, because of her peculiar gifts, it is a little more noticeable and a good deal more regrettable. It is only young authors, in the first flush of enthusiasm, who dare fully to defy convention. With each successive year they find themselves, almost unconsciously perhaps, a little more narrowed down, a little more hampered both in form and in subject, by what is expected of them, by what is demanded by the generation in which they live. In France, the conventional limitations

show themselves a little more obviously than in our country, thanks to that ultra-conservative institution, the French Academy. It is an interesting and enlightening study to compare the youthful and exuberant independence to be found in the earlier work of many a staid academician, with the admirably correct but colorless productions which only too often follow their election. Of course, if an author in the beginning is not violently independent or startlingly iconoclastic; if his departures either from the prescribed technique of fiction or the conventional range of subjects has not behind it that spark of genius which provokes antagonism, then he may very easily and with no great loss to the world settle down to the usual beaten path of the English novelist, happy in the conviction that he is showing a steady upward growth that keeps pace with his gain in popularity. But now and then one comes across a peculiarly flagrant and exasperating case of a big, erratic, undisciplined genius that, with proper encouragement, might in time achieve great things; but, because of the world's slowness to understand and to accept that which is new, especially when it runs counter to deep-rooted prejudice, the genius finds itself broken to harness, like a clipped-winged Pegasus, and compelled to pace along with due decorum.

It would be unfair to Mrs. Frankau to suggest

her as an example of such broken-spirited genius. In the face of much discouragement, she has ended by conquering her public, without any really humiliating sacrifice of her ideals. What has undoubtedly reacted in her favor is a solid reputation that she has simultaneously been building up in another department of letters, with a series of biographies and art monographs whose solid worth has from the first been unquestioned. Thus, her *Eighteenth Century Colored Prints* has been for ten years the recognized authority on the subject, and has given this special branch of the art a new valuation; her *Life of James and William Ward* complements and rounds out the earlier volume, and stands as a classic of its kind; while the London *Academy*, which only a few years ago was quite ruthless in its denunciations of her novels, does not hesitate to proclaim her biography of Lady Hamilton "the ripest and best work of the greatest woman writer now living in England." And yet it is undoubtedly true that the cumulation of unintelligent and misdirected criticism has had upon "Frank Danby" an effect identical in kind with that above suggested, and differing solely in the degree of its consequences. Current book reviews are proclaiming *Joseph in Jeopardy* Mrs. Frankau's finest effort, just as they previously passed a like verdict upon *The Heart of a Child* and *An Incomplete Etonian*. But to the reader

who happens to have read *Pigs in Clover* when it first appeared and to have been swept off his feet by the tremendous truth and unashamed human passion of it, these later more controlled, more carefully wrought pictures of English life suggest that unmistakable bluish pallor which comes from too much skimming and too much water.

Now, just why these later volumes of “Frank Danby’s ” leave an indefinable impression of a lowered vitality, a lack of riotous, red blood, an absence of the old-time storm and stress of primitive emotions, is at first a little puzzling to explain. Her characters are still etched in with the same unfaltering, sharply burined lines as of old, the individual situations are as poignantly and arrestingly real, the central themes as profoundly and broadly human. The ability of an unprotected girl to guard herself from the world, the prospects of a boy handicapped by unfortunate heredity, the fidelity of a husband to his marriage vows, are one and all subjects of as wide and vital interest as the injustice of our penal system, the elusive, insistent attraction of sex, or the social eligibility of the modern Jew. The essential difference, when we come to examine these volumes a little closer, lies, not in “Frank Danby’s ” art, but in her craftsmanship, in the mechanical framework on which she builds. Reviewers insist that she has gained in technical skill ; and, in point of symmetry

of structure, an elimination of all superfluous matter, an ending that carries with it a certain superficial logic and satisfies the popular demand for a happy solution, she undoubtedly has learned her lesson. But in her earlier books she was content to carry her theme straight to its foreordained consequences, whether it left a pleasant taste on the mental palate or not, and even though all established rules of structure were shattered in the process. Without intending to minimize the importance of technique, we may nevertheless point out that the more rigid we make its rules, the more they partake of the nature of ready-made garments, which run in certain stock sizes and fit best when tried upon the average commonplace individual, and which fit grotesquely or not at all upon the shoulders of a giant. *Pigs in Clover*, disproportioned and unsymmetrical though it is, belongs nevertheless to the order of giants. It might advantageously have been lopped off a few chapters sooner; it simply did not know where to stop growing. But no enlightened reader should be seriously annoyed by its structural eccentricities; the thing is too big for that. Beginning, however, with *The Heart of a Child*, there is a radical difference. We are keenly conscious, underneath the surface flesh-and-blood of these later stories, of a manufactured skeleton, which is palpably not bone and sinew, and we resent the artificiality of it. Meta-

phorically speaking, it is the difference between creation and taxidermy. It is usually the closing chapter where the internal string and wire protrude. There is a lack of finality about them, an impression that they have dodged the real point at issue, have failed to solve the problem propounded. “Frank Danby ” is not the first novelist who has found certain knots so intricate that, instead of untying them, it seemed simpler to cut them with a knife.

There is yet another reason which strikes closer to the root of the difference between “Frank Danby’s ” earlier and later method than any mere question of technique. It is her deliberate change of attitude towards life. From the first her real strength lay in her ability to look unflinchingly on the cruelty and injustice of the world at large, to picture without compromise the net results of human frailty and selfishness and sin. In all her books, she chose instinctively characters and situations that made for tragedy,—and she does so still. Life’s handicaps, the snares that heredity and environment so abundantly provide, enter into the very warp of her plots, the later and earlier alike. Yet, while the nature of her material has not changed, she has begun to cultivate a vein of optimism, to refuse to credit the evidence of her own experience, to insist upon hoping against logic for a happy outcome. Formerly, she had the air

of saying, authoritatively, "Here is a situation which, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, is bound to end in disaster." In her later books, she says, on the contrary, "Here is the hundredth case, the great exception,"—and, in spite of all her native talent and her acquired art, she does not quite succeed in carrying conviction.

There are some authors whose successive volumes seem to fit together with the same nicety as the carefully chiseled stones in the span of an arch, so that if a single volume were omitted from mention, the whole structure of a critical article would be in danger of toppling down. "Frank Danby" is not one of these. No chronological study of her works would help to explain why some of them loom up so large and others are so easily negligible. Accordingly, it seems more profitable to pass over her ineffectual volumes with little or no mention,—her almost forgotten *Copper Crash* and *A Babe in Bohemia*, the faulty workmanship of *Baccarat*, the futile unpleasantness of *Let the Roof Fall In*,—and dwell mainly upon the high lights, the few vitally significant volumes.

And, unquestionably, if "Frank Danby's" claim to a prominent place among contemporary story tellers is to be vindicated, the one book to single out for detailed analysis is *Pigs in Clover*.

It is not the first story in which she vivisected the baffling and mysterious attraction of sex and at the same time analyzed the English Jew with a merciless frankness verging upon malice. Both these elements also underlie the story of *Dr. Phillips*, in which a man of high attainment, erudite, wealthy and widely honored, falls a victim to the compelling lure of sex, and for the sake of a shallow, selfish, mercenary little woman, who does not even love him, sacrifices himself utterly, stoops to the basest of dishonor and uses the cloak of his profession to commit a cowardly murder. There are few scenes in modern fiction more remorselessly cruel than that in which Dr. Phillips, obsessed with his infatuation for another woman, stands by the bedside of his faithful, middle-aged, unlovely wife, who has just undergone a serious operation, and is now sleeping the unnatural sleep induced by the lingering effects of the anesthetic supplemented by a hypodermic injection of morphine. The chance is so opportune, the danger of detection so slight; the dose given by the other doctor might have been too strong for her weakened vitality; a second dose, inserted in the same puncture, leaves no trace, and the poor, faithful old wife breathes slowly and painlessly into oblivion.

Dr. Phillips, however, in spite of its unsparing satire of certain Jewish types, is really little more

than the story of a specific and peculiarly cruel crime. *Pigs in Clover* is a book of altogether different magnitude. It is obvious that one of the main arguments of the story, the one in which she herself seems to be most keenly interested, is a broad racial problem, the eligibility of the modern Jew to be received on a footing of social equality. At least, she proclaims this purpose in her title, suggesting, as it does, the pushing droves of unsavory and unwelcome intruders, eager for a feast upon the forbidden social clover. Incidentally, she theorizes a good deal about the modern Jew. As a matter of fact, her story contains just two types, the full-blooded Hebrew, self-made millionaire, proud of his success, conscious of his social shortcomings and good-naturedly amused at the pointed snubs that he receives; and the mongrel type, the "veneered cad in a golden frame," who almost passes for a gentleman, who betrays his origin to the casual stranger only by the slight burr of his "r," and who keeps the full extent of his social and moral obliquity concealed from those nearest and dearest to him, almost until the end. The way in which we are first introduced to Karl Althaus, South-African millionaire, and his adopted brother, Louis, in the full noontide of their prosperity, and then are permitted to catch just one fleeting glimpse of their origin, is a stroke of genius. It is as though a cur-

tain were drawn aside for an instant from some grim, ghastly, lurid picture, and then were allowed to fall back into place, almost before the spectator realizes the significance of what he has seen. One remembers only the squalid chamber in the wretched kosher provision shop in Houndsditch; the fat, repulsive Jewess with a greasy black fringe above her forehead, lying paralyzed and helpless on her bed, dead already save for the haunting pathos of her questioning eyes; the miserable Polish Jew, her husband, not satisfied with having drained her like a human leech, of her last penny and her last ounce of strength, but heaping upon her the ultimate insult of bringing in another woman, a girl from the London streets, to share their poverty and degradation. And finally, that crowning, indescribable scene with its haunting atmosphere of death: a dying Jewess, a dying English girl, a new-born child, and Karl Althaus, a lad of twelve, swearing to be a brother and a protector to that child throughout its life. And in this fugitive glimpse of their origin we get the secret of the life-long difference between these two. Karl, coarse, vulgar, unscrupulous, nevertheless has his own definite moral standard. Even as a boy, he might steal, but never beg; he might lie, but never break his promise. Louis is first, last and always a cad; and the chief distinguishing feature of a cad is, not that he has a lower stand-

ard than other men, but that in certain directions he has no moral standard at all.

There is a good deal of matter in *Pigs in Clover* which strikes the average reader as mere surplusage,—questions of racial antagonism, imperialism in South Africa, Cecil Rhodes and his Cape-to-Cairo schemes. The vital interest of the book is centered in the life history of just one man and one woman; in other words, it is a psychological problem,—and theoretically, the psychological writer who contents himself with a smaller canvas will do a proportionately stronger piece of work. The realist, the man who intentionally touches upon the material surface of things, may make his picture as broad as he pleases, may crowd it with figures from all paths of life, may present humanity in battalions and in regiments. But the author whose special province is to probe down into the mysteries of the human heart, and the interest of whose picture centers in the dingy back parlor of a London lodging-house, gains nothing, it would seem, from sketching a map of the entire British Empire over the margins of his canvas. And yet one hesitates to dogmatize upon a point like this. As already said, the book is rugged, unsymmetrical, almost crude; and yet, without that background of intrigue, and imperialism and national unrest, the destinies of the two or three central figures might not have loomed up so big and so

momentous. It is as if we saw them isolated on a height, silhouetted against the blackness of a storm-cloud.

Be this as it may, the essential details of the story are as follows: In all South Africa, there is no richer vein of ore than that known as the “Geldenrief,” and in it centers Karl Althaus’s scheme for a colossal fortune. But the richest part of the vein dips down under the farm of one Piet de Groot, a pig-headed old Boer, who cares nothing for gold mines and will not sell. This farm is his home, also his family burial lot; his father and grandfather lie beneath its sod, and no Englishman shall own a foot of it. But Piet is old and ill. His wife, Joan, is a young Englishwoman, with a clear, vivid brain, and an essentially feminine temperament. She lives estranged from him, but sooner or later she will inherit the farm. All these facts are well known to Karl. Furthermore, he knows that a crisis is imminent, that any day a political bombshell, like the Jameson Raid, may bring the Transvaal, and the “Geldenrief” with it, under English control. Meanwhile, there are two things which an unscrupulous man might do. If he were a man possessed of that rare and indefinable compelling power, he might exert it to reduce Piet de Groot’s English wife to a willing submission. If, like Karl, he happened to have in England a powerful friend, such as Lord Heyward,

—and especially if he was in possession of a shameful secret about Lord Heyward's daughter,—he might, through Parliament, exert a subtle influence upon England's foreign policy. Karl Althaus, being neither a blackmailer nor a seducer of women, misses both opportunities. His half-brother, Louis, being an adept in these arts, misses neither.

Many other novelists, both before and since *Pigs in Clover*, have written of the mysterious attraction of sex, that indefinable spell which a particular man may exert over a particular woman. The idea, however, has been elaborated and analyzed by "Frank Danby" in a way that seems to leave nothing further to be added:

There is a mystery known to all who know men and women, to all who have insight into, sympathy with, or understanding of their fellow travelers, but it is blank and incomprehensible to the Pharisees, and to all who read and run at the same time. This is the mystery that fills the divorce courts, mocks the incredulous and sets at naught all creeds and conditions. It is a certain something, subtle, sweet and rare, not a perfume, not a touch, but an echo of both, light, elusive and pervading, that is the special property of some loose-living men, a property that is beyond the reach of analysis, but recognizable in the free-masonry of the passions by all who have realized its existence. It is as the candle to the moth, as the rose to the but-

terfly, as the magnet to the steel. It is the surface lure of sex, it is the all-compelling whisper, almost it seems that to hear it is to obey. But some ears are deaf to it, some few dull ears.

This is the paragraph that serves as an introduction to the chapters detailing the conquest of Joan de Groot by Louis Althaus,—chapters wonderful in their discernment and merciless frankness, chapters which probably portray more nearly than any other contemporary novel the English equivalent of a *Bel-Ami*. To Louis, Joan's attraction was largely, but not wholly, a matter of self-interest. It was not merely that she was a means to an end, a stepping-stone to the possession of the “Geldenrief,” thereby enabling him to steal a march upon his brother, Karl. He had not been ten minutes in her presence before he realized that “her bright, elusive womanhood was shy and wild, and he wanted it, as men always want to bring down wild things.” And as for Joan, in spite of her clear, level little brain, the virile brain that had made her a personage of some consequence in South Africa, and had produced one much discussed novel, called *The Kaffir and His Keeper*,—she knew within those same ten minutes, “that she was lonely, and that love, the love of which she read and of which she wrote, had been nothing but a pulseless world, colder than print.

Her loneliness shuddered through her and then was gone, and the low voice with its burred 'r's' filled its place."

The elaboration of this drama is a bit of rare narrative art. The history of Louis's conquest, the deliberate, remorseless effort to bring down a "wild thing," is narrated with a probing insistence, a consummate knowledge, in which not a word rings false. "He blotted out thought and gave her sensation in its stead; she vibrated at his touch as violin strings at the hand of a musician," and again, "Always he met her moods half-way. If she did not care for him *in every way*, if she was not as sure as he was, that life meant nothing for either of them apart, then she was right. He would not take her in a mood. She must come to him because she wanted him as he wanted her. He was an artist in his rôle." The best test of the convincing truth of this picture is that it makes one foresee so clearly just what the inevitable outcome will be. A "dream voyage" to England, a brief month or two of paradise in a cottage near Bushey, and then the true character of Louis gradually betrays itself, the smallness of his moral stature, his abysmal selfishness. Joan remains the woman of moods that she has always been, and he wearies of meeting these moods half-way. She is a woman who will delay dinner for half an hour in order to gaze at a sunset, oblivious of his im-

patience and his hunger. She lacks the tact to guard against the inevitable steak coming on burned, cold and utterly unpalatable. Manlike, Louis ceases to come to Bushey, even on Sunday.

Instead Joan went to him in London. She had to meet him in unfrequented eating-houses, at small hotels, where in private rooms, stiff with obtrusive velvet furniture, horrible with long pauses between the courses, with the leering waiter knocking ostentatiously before he entered, the glamour of love began to fall before her blue eyes, and the reality of it to lurk hideously in the back of her drugged mind.

Then comes the memorable scene, on the night when the two come together, each in possession of a momentous secret, she with the knowledge of a strange and wonderful prospect that for the first time seems to justify her prayers that Piet de Groot may die,—and, woman-like, she fancies that Louis will understand and share her joy. The secret that Louis carries with him is the news that Piet de Groot is already dead,—but it is news which he has no intention of sharing with Joan, at least not yet, not until he has secured her signature to a full and absolute release of her interest in the “Geldenrief.” But in thinking that he can obtain this, he shows how little he understands Joan’s character. Temperamentally, she may be frail, but in money dealings she is scrupulously honest. She has wronged her husband enough al-

ready; never through act of hers shall his wishes in regard to the property be disregarded. So, in spite of her bitter dread of the inevitable "scene," she has the strength to deny him, to argue with him, to hold him off. As fate wills it, within an hour after he has left her, planning to renew the attack, she learns the truth; that her husband is dead, that Louis knows it, that he has not and never has had any idea of marrying her; in short, that his interest in her, first, last and always, has centered in the "Geldenrief." She knows her own pitiful weakness, she foresees that if not to-day, then to-morrow or the day after, at a pleading word from him, at the beloved sound of those softly burred "r's," she will sign the paper as he asks. So she burns her ships behind her. She seeks a lawyer, executes a paper relinquishing all rights in her dead husband's property, posts it to South Africa, and disappears into the obscurity of the East End of London.

It is here, some months later, that Karl Althaus finds her, destitute, a pitiful wreck of her former self, with too frail a grip on life even to mourn the child that was born dead. It is from her lips that Karl learns of the share that Louis has had in her misery.

"I left him. He didn't leave me, he didn't desert me, don't think it, Karl. He was disappointed in

me. I didn't want to be a drag on him. I knew he was dependent upon you. I knew he wasn't rich——”

“What!” he shouted, screamed it almost. No one had ever seen Karl like this before. He had risen from his seat, his face was purple; but still he saw her, terrified, white.

“Go on! Go on! *He wasn't rich——*”

“Karl!”

“I'm beside myself. Don't mind me,—he wasn't rich, you say. For God's sake, go on! Oh, my God, don't tell me he left you without money! Oh, my God, the thing I've reared!”

Karl marries her. That is to say, he gives her the shelter of his name, demanding nothing, accepting nothing beyond the privilege of reinstating her in the world's esteem and her own self-respect. Yet his very generosity, his unvarying consideration, his careful attempt at concealment of his own feelings, make her life a daily punishment. “Karl's eyes, which seemed to her pleading eyes, Karl's wishes, when she thought she read them, Karl's hand on her shoulder, all outraged her; for in her life there was, there could be, but one man.” There is the keynote: she is the type of woman in whose life there could be but one man. The author might have written *finis* after that word, instead of forcing us to follow the story to the bitterness of its inevitable end. The world is never smaller than when it contains two people who by all the laws of

justice and honor ought never to meet again. It is a foregone conclusion that sooner or later Joan and Louis will meet, and that when they do, he will try to lure her back to him, if only to gratify a contemptible vanity in his own power of pleasing. And if Joan once hears the soft tones of his voice, with that unforgettable foreign burr, she will have no power to deny. But once already Joan has had the strength of weakness, she has burned her bridges. That time what Louis coveted was money, and she placed it beyond his desire and her weakness by relinquishing her own hold upon it. This time it is something more precious, it is life itself that she must relinquish, in order to thwart him; and so the curtain falls as the last flicker of sensation in Joan's dying brain translates the futile knocking at her locked door into the hammer-strokes driving home the nails into her coffin.

It is a pity that the subject-matter in *The Sphinx*, artistically the second in importance among "Frank Danby's" novels, makes it inexpedient to analyze it at similar length. Frankly, its theme is *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, played with variations. As an experiment in construction, it has an almost unique interest. Very seldom has a novelist ventured to take for the central figure a dead man,—no, not even a dead man, but the mere wraith of a man's memory, the imaginary

ideal which the man's own actions shattered before his death. There is undeniably something infinitely pathetic in the figure of a beautiful and much-courted woman, stricken down by some obscure spinal trouble, at the very hour of her husband's need, and doomed to linger on through years of helpless martyrdom, branded and pilloried by the infamy of the name she bears:

Sybil Heseltine, whom her friends called the Sphinx, was a hedonist, with level brows and a dead-white skin, who wore Egyptian designs on her Greek tea-gowns and talked of superabundant health and vigor while she lay perpetually on her sofa, propped up by silken cushions, vital only in her wonderful eyes.

There is something almost uncanny in the spell which the author has succeeded in casting around this woman, whose part is so strange and dark a riddle, and who is striving so pitifully to hold together a little coterie of the faithful, and to preserve a halo around the memory of the man who has dragged her in the mire. But the fact remains that, from first to last, the atmosphere of the book is pathological. To discuss it frankly and fully would be possible only to the pages of a law report or a medical journal. Consequently, in spite of the book's undeniable power, its sincerity, its pervading quality of mercy, one feels

that it belongs to the order of books which were better not to have been written at all.

Baccarat may be dismissed even more summarily. It may be compared to that mongrel product of modern architectural economy, the two-family house. Originally the first half of it was detached and rented out separately, as a magazine novelette; and the second half of it might conceivably have likewise been offered for separate consumption. The theme of the first half was a blind instinct for gambling which, like a craving for a deadly drug, sometimes seizes upon a man or a woman, blunts their faculties, drags them down from one ignominy to another. The second half has no further structural connection with the first than merely that it is the working out of one particular problem resulting from one particular infamy into which a woman has been dragged by her gambling passion. She might have stooped in the same manner from any one of a dozen other motives. Gambling, in the second half, ceases to be of structural importance. The point of view has shifted from the wife to the husband; the central theme is no longer the wife's frailty, but the husband's strength,—his ability to face the problem of granting pardon to infidelity, the problem so boldly and truthfully worked out in a score of Continental novels, from Margueritte's *Le Pardon* to d'Annunzio's *L'Inno-*

cente. Because this theme has been supremely handled by other writers, and also, one suspects, because "Frank Danby" herself was conscious of having made a false start and was committed to a solution that lacks the ring of truth, the book suffers sadly by way of contrast. It stands as a frail, abortive attempt, interesting chiefly as a conspicuous instance of a gifted author's lack of self-criticism.

This brings us down to the works in "Frank Danby's" new manner, beginning with *The Heart of a Child*. The central theme of this book is the vexed question whether a young girl born in the slums, bred in the gutter, flung at the most critical years of her life into the noisome atmosphere of cheap dancing halls, may from an inborn instinct succeed in protecting herself and maintaining her own and the world's respect. That is a theme which one would gladly have seen developed with the boldness of the earlier "Frank Danby," the "Frank Danby" of a decade ago. The volume that she has actually written is handicapped by its neat and careful structure, its preordained plan of ending with a triumphant social rise and a marriage to a peer of the realm. It is true that she has handicapped herself by making her specific case a peculiarly difficult one; that she has taken her future Gaiety Girl, Sally Snape, from the most dilapidated and depraved rookery to be

found in the London slums; that she shows her to us as being peculiarly friendless and unguarded, and almost incredibly unaware of the dangers that beset her; that she brings her repeatedly in contact with the sort of people most likely to do her harm, and in every way seems to have tried deliberately to make the conditions so extreme as to force us to say, "If there is an avenue of escape for Sally Snape, then no young woman's case is hopeless." Now, considered as a specific story of a single human life, *The Heart of a Child* is an uncommon piece of sheer narrative dexterity; it convinces us, against our better judgment, that the girl escapes unscathed, and not merely escapes, but each time achieves an advantage from the very circumstances that wrought her danger. Not until her marriage with young Lord Kidderminster, does a doubt insinuate itself that the career of Sally Snape was not likely to have been quite so unspotted as "Frank Danby" has so engrossingly depicted it. But if we regard it, not as a specific story, but as the solution of a general thesis, her answer must be epitomized somewhat after this fashion: that a young woman who goes upon the stage, unless surrounded by special safeguards of money and influence, finds herself beset by such a host of insidious dangers that she simply has not a ghost of a chance, unless a series of small miracles are wrought for her exclusive bene-

fit. This is probably not at all the impression that Mrs. Frankau wished to convey; yet she had no right to expect any other result from her persistent use of that most tricky and least justifiable device known to novelists, the Intervention of Fate. And, of course, by doing so, instead of solving her problem, she simply begs the question. It is all very well, we tell ourselves, for the Sally Snapes of real life to have the safeguard of unawakened desires, the innocent heart of a child, the instinctive aversion of being touched,—it will all count for nothing, unless fate is kind enough to intercede for her over and over again, as it does in the case of this particular Sally Snape. “Frank Danby” starts her in life with practically no chance, until fate removes her patient drudge of a mother, her drunken brute of a father. She might then have been driven onto the streets, had not two immature boys out of pure good comradeship offered to share their room with her. And when in the course of months this innocent propinquity becomes ill-advised, fate again intervenes by ejecting them from a tenement which the city has condemned. And in the same way, all through her upward course, from helper in a jam factory to cloak model in Madame Violette’s West End establishment, from cloak model to Gaiety Girl, she is saved—not by her inborn distaste for men’s society and men’s ways, her ignorance of

what their attentions mean, but by wholly extraneous circumstances; the wrecking of Charlie Peastone's dogcart, the illness of Joe Aaron's wife, the hundred and one events, large or small, that cause a different ending to the day from that which the men had planned. Yet in simple justice to the author, it should be added that while reading *The Heart of a Child*, we forget for the time being that there are such things as theses and technique and the law of probabilities. We think of it simply as the life-story of one frail young woman, drifting as helplessly as a cork along the conflicting currents of London life; we are caught, just as the various characters in the story are caught, with the magic of her personality, the intangible, elusive quality that refuses to be analyzed, but that Mrs. Frankau has nevertheless seized and flung before us in her pages with such poignancy and power that we feel we are being allowed to probe a girl's inmost soul. Although it is infected with the taint of romanticism and is separated by an incalculable distance from the rugged sincerity of *Pigs in Clover*, it must be admitted that *The Heart of a Child* contains some character study that ranks with the best of its author's earlier period.

Sebastian, although structurally a better book than *The Heart of a Child*, has analogous faults, and a like failure to carry her theme to its logical

and tragic conclusion. The inferiority of the half-breed is one of the admitted commonplaces of biology. The fact that a human mongrel usually possesses all the vices and few of the virtues of the two parent races has formed the basis of many a tragedy, both in fact and in fiction. This is a problem which, as we have already seen, has occupied “Frank Danby” in at least one of her books. In *Pigs in Clover* the plot hinges mainly upon the mental and moral gulf between a fine, large-hearted Hebrew gentleman, full of high aspirations and pride of race, and a currish, cowardly mongrel, who has added to the worst qualities of his father’s people the additional viciousness acquired from his mother, a girl of the streets. But in *Sebastian*, Mrs. Frankau has studied a problem which, while analogous to this, is really quite new in fiction, namely, the problem whether the offspring of two people who, although of the same blood, are mentally so out of sympathy as to be of practically a different race, will not, like the physical half-breed, inherit the weaknesses of both parents and the strength of neither. Sebastian is precisely such a mental and moral half-breed.

Sebastian’s father is a London merchant, the head of a proud old firm of paper manufacturers. Although he has married into a social stratum much above him, and understands quite well his

wife's contempt for a mere money-maker like himself, he remains to the last as proud of his business on the one hand as he is, on the other, of his wife and son. The wife, sprung from a long line of literary and artistic folk, considers herself splendidly tolerant of her husband's inferiority. She is quite content to accept the money he lavishes upon her, but can give him scarcely any of her time because she herself is an author whose novels have attained quite a *succès d'estime*. Incidentally, they bring her in a not inconsiderable revenue, which characteristically she immediately converts from the vulgar form of money into the nobler but quite useless shape of rare bric-à-brac. The fact that her husband is rapidly killing himself by overwork and that she might have lightened his burden is a detail which never pierces through the self-absorption of her artistic temperament. Sebastian, the product of this ill-assorted union, is from early childhood admittedly his mother's child, the heir to her hereditary gifts. It never occurs to his father, save as a foolish and unattainable longing, that he might follow in the footsteps of trade and carry on the firm name which otherwise must perish. It is an understood thing that Sebastian is to be a literary genius, that he is to go through Eton and Cambridge, and whatever further training is needed, regardless of time or cost. But somehow matters do not

work out quite in the prescribed way. In school, his masters recognize him as a precocious genius—only they discover more precosity than genius. His verse is good, but not quite good enough; and somehow the prizes always just escape him. To the real artistic temperament, such as that of his mother, the consciousness of good work, sincerely done, would have been reward enough. Sebastian, however, must have the acclaim of public recognition, the substantial reward of a money prize. The business instinct inherited from the father demands an equivalent for value received. This is why, to his mother's distress, he turns his back on Eton and Cambridge.

But another motive, born of the shrewd observation that is not a heritage from his mother, leads him definitely to abandon literature and go into business, the paper business of his father and his uncles—and this impulse is simply and solely the discovery that his father is a desperately sick man, who may at any day or hour be stricken with death. Curiously enough, he discovers that while he had always loved languages and hated mathematics, the rudiments of business and the mere mechanical task of casting up columns come to him with amazing facility. He also has the inborn gift of affability and persuasiveness; boy though he is, the business grows under his aid and guidance with remarkable strides. And so, when in a few

brief years the father does suddenly die, and Sebastian acquires full control, he launches forth upon a scale that amazes his competitors, frightens some of them, and secretly amuses others who foresee the inevitable end. For, of course, Sebastian as a business man is no more sterling coin than he was as a man of letters. His material demand for payment spoiled him as a poet, his visionary temperament spoils him for a merchant. In short, he is an intellectual half-breed, with all the weaknesses of the business man and the man of letters, and with the saving qualities of neither. Had Mrs. Frankau been quite honest in her treatment of this problem it must have ended in failure—the blotting out of the unfit. But her careful and circumscribed little scaffolding demanded a happy ending, and she must build accordingly. So she brings to the rescue a very rich and very generous man who happens to love Sebastian's widowed mother, and for her sake is willing to sink a few millions in Sebastian's crippled business—with the intention, however, of keeping a strong guiding hand on the lad's future movements. Here, as in *The Heart of a Child*, Mrs. Frankau has begged the issue; but one does not seriously mind it because the real solution is sufficiently obvious.

This brings us down to "Frank Danby's" latest volume, with the self-explanatory title, *Joseph in Jeopardy*. Now, partly because of the title, partly

also because this modern Joseph and his still more modern Delilah loom up rather large in the book, it is quite natural for the average reader to make the mistake of regarding their relationship and its outcome as the crucial interest of the volume, and be disappointed in the ending which, from the point of view of the lady in question, is undeniably an anti-climax. But it happens that to "Frank Danby" the interest centers in a third character, namely, Joseph's wife. In this disquieting and subversive era of the suffragette, it is pleasant to find that "Frank Danby" retains a sane and wholesome belief in the old-fashioned domestic virtues and the courage to make a timid, unattractive little woman win a difficult victory solely by force of them. But the book well deserves to be examined somewhat more in detail. It opens with the ostentatious marriage of Dennis Passiful, the new owner of Abinger's famous art gallery in Bond Street, to Mabel, only daughter of Amos Juxton, millionaire founder of "Juxton's Limited," which, with its battle-cries of "Emancipation for Women at Last," and "Pure Food served hot and hot," contracts for a small annual subscription to serve three substantial meals a day, delivered to the home. Dennis was left an orphan in early childhood and educated,—although this he does not know until later,—on a fund raised by voluntary contributions.

Among the contributors, the three who gave most generously were the good Vicar who adopted him, old Abe Abinger, expert art dealer, whose art gallery he inherited, and Juxton, whose house was a second home, and whose daughter, Mabel, a kindly fate seemed to have destined for his wife. As a matter of fact, Dennis married her, not for love, but out of pity, and with never one thought of the Juxton millions. He had supposed that Mabel was in love with Roddy Ainsworth; but when Roddy went off to the colonies with a musical comedy company, and Dennis found Mabel in tears, he helped to dry her eyes, and promptly stepped into the breach, reminding her that there was "another fellow besides Roddy." To the casual beholder, Mabel seemed scarcely the fitting mate for such a fine specimen of English manhood as Dennis. "Even in her wedding dress, and through the filmy lace that softened and enshrouded her, one could see that she was lean, and her back a little rounded; that her face and hair matched in a dead level of dun; that she had neither style, presence, nor beauty; that she looked every day of her six-and-twenty years, and had no grace nor compensating charm." Furthermore, she had no conversation, beyond a fund of inconsequential details about household affairs, the servants, the marketing, the weekly wash:

“Dennis, do you remember if you have had five clean shirts since Saturday? I’ve counted them over three times, but I can’t make them any less. And did I tell you those new socks of yours are going into holes so fast? I wish I could get better darning thread here, but the shops are really very poor. They’ve torn quite a hole out of one of your pyjamas at the laundry. I believe it’s a steam laundry, although they assured me it was all done by hand.”

In fact, it is not surprising that Dennis should have soon come to feel that “his whole life was permeated with soiled linen,” to take his wife more and more for granted and see less and less of her; so that, by the end of five years, while there had been no outward break, they were practically living separate lives. It was during the fifth year that he first beheld Lady Diana Wayne. It was at a theater and “his eyes, before they had time to reach the stage, were arrested by the most perfect back he had ever seen; he did not know a living woman’s back could be so beautiful.”

The back and arm absorbed him during the first act. It was only toward the end of it that he was seized by an overmastering desire to see the face that surmounted this wonderful torso. He gratified this desire by going to the end of the stalls in the interval during the first and second act. The dark hair, parted in the middle, waved loosely into that roll of hair that left the back part of her neck visible.

The profile, the short nose, the square chin, were pure Greek. She turned to speak to the man by her side. The movement of the slender neck was like music. Dennis could see the penciled brows under her dark hair and the iridescent green of her eyes.

On the part of Lady Diana, as well as Dennis, it was a case of love at first sight. But with him, although he was slow to realize it, it was a strong man's violent passion for the first and only really beautiful woman he had ever taken in his arms. To epitomize the history of their playing with fire, the subtlety of Lady Diana's temptations, the innate decency that saves Dennis from himself, would be to no purpose. It is all done with admirable art and subtle understanding of men and women. But just a few further details must be given, in order to make the end intelligible. Mabel has a brother, Ted, whose wife, Fanny, is a venomous, unprincipled little wretch, whose heartlessness is the chief factor in causing her husband's early death. Incidentally, it should be said that the chapters recording Ted Juxton's last illness stand out as some of the best work "Frank Danby" ever did. Now Fanny, among her other misdeeds, is carrying on an intrigue with Cosmo Merritt, the brother of Lady Diana. There is no good reason why Fanny should wish to hurt Mabel, but she is the type of woman who cannot bear the thought that another woman is better than her-

self; so she tells Cosmo that Roddy Ainsworth, who is back in England and has seen a good deal of the Passiflora, is Mabel's lover. Lady Diana, seizing eagerly upon this news, makes her big blunder; she tells Dennis what she has heard about his wife, urges him to seek a divorce, and suggests that, even if the scandal is groundless, it is still possible to doctor up the evidence so as to win; she is sure there is enough to convince a jury!

There was a flush upon his forehead, and every thought of Diana and her loveliness left his mind. *Mabel*—that Mabel's name should be used in this way, her reputation threatened! The heat in his blood was different now and more generous. He was overwhelmed with sudden anger or shame. That he should have to defend his wife to Diana! . . . “You must understand how impossible this story is about my wife; I must make you understand. *My wife!*” he said the words again and was conscious of the tenderness in his heart: “My wife is the most loyal, gentle, faithful . . .” He could not go on.

From this hour, Lady Diana's hold upon this modern Joseph is at an end. It remains only to indicate that there is one other scene, far too intimate to be clumsily retold, but infinitely pathetic and strangely wise, in which Mabel, all unconscious of the powers that have warred against her

happiness, in her utter unselfishness does the act and speaks the words that inexpressibly touch her husband and eventually bring her to her woman's kingdom, "the kingdom which Juxton's Limited and the Woman's Suffrage League are trying so hard and so successfully to demolish."

Yet, in spite of much fine artistry and wise understanding of human nature, which makes it difficult to discuss this latest story by "Frank Danby" otherwise than indulgently, it is obvious that its value is impaired by a pervading strain of sentimentalism. On sober second thought, we are no more convinced of Dennis's fidelity than we previously were of Sally Snape's innocence and Sebastian's rehabilitation as a man of business. Mrs. Frankau still remains an artist of the first rank; she has mellowed with years and, because of her broader charity, her greater faith in human nature, she in a measure disarms criticism. Yet in the course of the evolution she has undergone, she has sacrificed rather more than she has gained. She no longer offends fastidious, sensitive souls with sordid, unclean environments, shameless and vicious lives. But in painting men and women, not as they are, but as she likes to believe that they might be, she has lost that sterling mark which makes *Pigs in Clover*, with all its faults, a work of genius,—the mark of fearless and absolute truth.

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"FRANK DANBY"

(MRS. JULIA FRANKAU)

I. PUBLISHED VOLUMES, WITH REVIEWS

a. Published under Pseudonym:

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b. Published under name of Mrs. Julia Frankau:

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WILLIAM FREND DE MORGAN

I. PUBLISHED VOLUMES, WITH REVIEWS

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MRS. HENRY E. DUDENEY

I. PUBLISHED VOLUMES, WITH REVIEWS

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JOHN GALSWORTHY

I. PUBLISHED VOLUMES, WITH REVIEWS

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MAURICE HEWLETT

I. PUBLISHED VOLUMES, WITH REVIEWS

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RUDYARD KIPLING *

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accumulated around them have already been made the subject of bibliographical industry so often that no useful purpose would be served by doing over again here in a necessarily condensed form what has already been done thoroughly elsewhere. Moreover, as most of this author's work consists of short stories and short poems, an adequate bibliography would constitute a small volume in itself. It seems sufficient to refer to a few of the best sources, from which complete lists of bibliographies will be readily obtainable.

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WILLIAM JOHN LOCKE

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INDEX

OF NAMES AND TITLES

- Abaft the Funnel* (Kipling), 124
Academy, The, 20, 282, 345, 382
Affair of Dishonor, An, (De Morgan), 33, 49-51
Alice-for-Short (De Morgan), 39-41, 53
Alice in Wonderland (Carroll), 286
Almayer's Folly (Conrad), 7, 11, 12, 19
Ambassadors, The, (James), 193, 346
Amy Foster (Conrad), 25-26
Anna of the Five Towns (Bennett), 213, 221-222
Anna Karénina (Tolstoy), 113
Annunzio, d', Gabriele, 299, 349, 377, 400
Apuleius, 282
Arminel of the West (Trevena), 329, 331-333
Assommoir, L', (Zola), 357
At the End of the Passage (Kipling), 142
Athenæum, The, 101, 205, 208
Atlantic Monthly, The, 2
Audrey Craven (Sinclair), 256
Babe in Bohemia, A, (Danby), 386
Baccarat (Danby), 386, 400-401
Bagot, Richard, 368
Ballad of Reading Gaol, The, (Wilde), 398
Balzac, Honoré de, 4, 358, 359
Bar Sinister, The, (Davis), 283
Barbary Sheep (Hichens), 365-366
Barrack-Room Ballads (Kipling), 123, 130
Barrie, J. M., 286
Battle of the Weak, The, (Dudeney), 322
Bazán, Emilia Pardo, 378
Beacon, The (Phillpotts), 116-119
Bella Donna (Hichens), 350, 369-370
Belovèd Vagabond, The, (Locke), 148, 150, 153, 155, 163-165, 167, 168, 358
Below the Milldam (Kipling), 143
Bennett, Arnold, 206-231, 251, 325
Benson, E. F., 233, 251
Besant, Sir Walter, 233
Between Two Thieves (Dehan), 378
Beyond the Pale (Kipling), 142
Black, William, 97, 251
Black Beauty (Sewell), 283
Black Spaniel, The, (Hichens), 348, 351, 352, 353
Bob, Son of Battle (Ollivant), 280, 282-285

- Böhlau, Helene, 378
 Böhme, Margarete, 378
Bookman, The, 120
 Boynton, H. W., 52
Bracken (Trevena), 324, 338-341
Brazenhead the Great (Hewlett), 80, 82-85
Brewster's Millions (McCutcheon), 216
 Browning, Robert, 13
Buondelmonte's Saga (Hewlett), 78, 79
Buried Alive (Bennett), 217-218

 Cable, George W., 95
Call of the Blood, The, (Hichens), 366-367
Call of the Wild, The, (London), 283
Capsina, The, (Benson), 233
Card, The, (Bennett), 218-219
 Cecil, Lady Robert, 35
Charlatan, The, (Gissing), 251
Chêne et le Roseau, Le, (La Fontaine), 21
Children of the Mist (Phillipotts), 94, 101-104, 105, 107, 110, 113, 327
Children of the Sea (Conrad), 14, 20
City of Pleasure, The, (Bennett), 216
Clayhanger (Bennett), 213, 219, 226-230
 Collins, Wilkie, 40
Colossus, The, (Roberts), 232
 Conan Doyle, Sir Arthur, 50
 Conrad, Joseph, 1-30, 33, 54, 55, 56, 107, 204, 290
Contemporary Review, The, 2

Copper Crash (Danby), 386
Country House, The, (Galsworthy), 182, 191-194
Courting of Dinah Shadd, The, (Kipling), 142
 Crawford, F. Marion, 251, 368
Critic, The, 344

 "Danby, Frank," 254, 255, 376-414
 Danny (Ollivant), 280
 Dante, 61
 Daudet, Alphonse, 377
 Davis, Richard Harding, 283
Débâcle, La (Zola), 13
 Dehan, Richard, 378
 De Morgan, William Frend, 31-53, 281
Denry the Audacious (Bennett), 217-219
Departmental Ditties (Kipling), 123
Derelicts (Locke), 156-157, 169
 Dickens, Charles, 4, 8, 33, 120, 178, 179
Divine Fire, The, (Sinclair), 208, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 262, 271-278, 279
Dolly Dialogues, The, (Hope), 233, 234, 235, 237-239, 244, 250
Dop Doctor, The, (Dehan), 378
Dr. Phillips (Danby), 379, 387
Drums of the Fore-and-Aft, The, (Kipling), 139
 Dudeney, Mrs. Henry, 297-323
 Dumas, Alexandre, 236
 Du Maurier, George, 34
Dweller on the Threshold, The, (Hichens), 352

- Earthwork out of Tuscany*, (Hewlett), 65
Eighteenth Century Colored Prints (Frankau), 382
 Eliot, George, 95
Essays in Verse (Sinclair), 256
Esther Waters (Moore), 101
Falk (Conrad), 26-28
Felia (Hichens), 357-359
 Fielding, Henry, 120
Fille Elisa, La, (E. and J. de Goncourt), 377
Five Nations, The, (Kipling), 130-135
Flames (Hichens), 343, 351
 Flaubert, Gustave, 8, 208, 209, 230, 377
Florence, Villani's History of, 58, 59
Folly Corner (Dudeney), 297, 299, 306-312, 313
Fond Adventures (Hewlett), 78
Fool Errant, The, (Hewlett), 80-82
Forest Lovers, The, (Hewlett), 20, 57, 65, 82, 87
 France, Anatole, 153
 Frankau, Mrs. Julia (see "Frank Danby").
Fraternity (Galsworthy), 178, 182, 194-199, 200
 Fromentin, Eugène, 348, 349
Fruitful Vine, The, (Hichens), 350, 370-374
Furze the Cruel (Trevena), 324, 328, 329, 333-337, 338, 341
 Galdós, Benito Perez, 230
 Galsworthy, John, 2, 3, 4, 5, 21, 177-205, 251, 281, 325
Garden of Allah, The, (Hichens), 342, 347, 350, 353, 362-365, 370, 375
 Gautier, Théophile, 349
Gentleman, The, (Ollivant), 50, 280, 289-296
 Gissing, George, 208, 250
Glimpse, The, (Bennett), 217, 219-220
Glory of Clementina, The, (Locke), 172-175
 Glyn, Elinor, 374
God in the Car, The, (Hope), 232
Golden Ass, The, (Apuleius), 282
Golden Fetich, The, (Phillpotts), 109
 Goncourt, De, (Édouard and Jules), 208, 209, 230, 377
Good Red Earth, The, (Phillpotts), 107, 327
Grand Babylon Hotel, The, (Bennett), 215
Granite (Trevena), 333, 338
Great Miss Driver, The, (Hope), 244-247
Green Carnation, The, (Hichens), 342, 344, 348, 351
Grimm's Fairy Tales, 286
 "Gyp," 233
Habitation Enforced, An, (Kipling), 143-144
 Haggard, H. Rider, 109
Halfway House (Hewlett), 56, 88-90
Hans Brinker (Dodge), 41
 Hardy, Thomas, 95
Heart of a Child, The, (Danby), 379, 382, 384, 401-404, 408
Heart of Darkness (Conrad), 14, 24, 29

- Heather* (Trevena), 328,
 330, 333, 337, 338
Helena's Path (Hope), 243-
 244
Helpmate, The, (Sinclair),
 252, 255, 262-269
 Hewlett, Maurice, 50, 54-93,
 94
 Hichens, Robert, 342-375
Hilda Lessways (Bennett),
 227
Hitopadeça, The, 137
 Holmes, Oliver Wendell, 52
 Hope, Anthony, 232-251
 Howells, William Dean, 95,
 113, 206, 211, 230
Hugo (Bennett), 216
 Huysmans, Joris Karl, 377

Idols (Locke), 156, 159-
 160, 169
Imaginative Man, An,
 (Hichens), 354-355
Immortal Moment, The,
 (Sinclair), 269-271
Incomplete Etonian, An,
 (Danby), 379, 382
Indiscretion of the Duchess,
The, (Hope), 235
Innocente, L' (Annunzio),
 400
Intrusions of Peggy, The,
 (Hope), 250
Island Pharisees, The,
 (Galsworthy), 180, 183
 "Islanders, The," (Kip-
 ling), 133, 135
It Never Can Happen
Again (De Morgan), 45-
 48, 52
Ivanhoe (Scott), 291

James, Henry, 1, 8, 33, 128,
 130, 142, 152, 230, 346
Joseph in Jeopardy (Dan-
 by), 379, 380, 382, 408-
 414

Joseph Vance (De Morgan),
 32, 33, 34, 37-39, 50, 53
Judgment of Eve, The, (Sin-
 clair), 255
Jungle Books, The, (Kip-
 ling), 127, 130, 135, 137,
 143, 282
Just-So Stories, The, (Kip-
 ling), 127, 282, 286

Katasaritsagara, The, 137
Kim (Kipling), 17, 55, 129,
 130, 135, 137-141
 Kipling, Rudyard, 17, 54,
 55, 56, 122-147, 282

 La Fontaine, Jean de, 21
 Lavedan, Henri, 233
Leonora (Bennett), 221, 222
 "Lesson, The," (Kipling),
 133, 135
Let the Roof Fall In (Dan-
 by), 386
Letters from the East
 (Kipling), 129
Lettres de Jeunesse (Zola),
 124
Light that Failed, The,
 (Kipling), 283
Likely Story, A, (De Mor-
 gan), 33, 49, 51, 52
Little Novels of Italy (Hew-
 lett), 78
Little White Bird, The,
 (Barrie), 286
 Locke, William John, 148-
 176, 325, 358
Londoners, The, (Hichens),
 343, 351
Loot of Cities, The, (Ben-
 nett), 216
Lord Jim (Conrad), 21, 24,
 29, 204
 Loti, Pierre, 349
Loup-Garou! (Phillpotts),
 94
Lourdes (Zola), 348

- Lucas, E. V., 34
Lying Prophets (Phillpotts), 98-101
- McCutcheon, George Barr, 216
McTeague (Norris), 335
 Maartens, Maarten, 251
 Macy, John A., 2
Maison Tellier, La, (Maupassant), 377
Man from the North, A, (Bennett), 207, 209
Man of Property, The, (Galsworthy), 180, 181, 183-191, 194, 200
Man Who Would Be King, The, (Kipling), 137
 "Mandalay" (Kipling), 129
 Margueritte, Paul, 400
Mark of the Beast, The, (Kipling), 142
Maternity of Harriott Wick-en, The, (Dudeney), 301-306
 Maupassant, Guy de, 8, 152, 208, 230, 376
 Maxwell, William B., 251
Men of Marlowe's (Dudeney), 297, 312-317
 Mendès, Catulle, 359
 Meredith, George, 33, 152, 325
 Merrick, Leonard, 207, 325
Mill on the Floss, The, (Eliot), 95
Mine Own People (Kipling), 126
Mirror of the Sea, The, (Conrad), 19, 29
 Moore, F. Frankfort, 233
 Moore, George, 377
Morals of Marcus Ordeyne, The, (Locke), 148, 150, 153, 160-163, 166, 169
Mother of the Man, The, (Phillpotts), 115
- Motley, A*, (Galsworthy), 200-201
Mr. and Mrs. Nevill Tyson (Sinclair), 257-261
Mrs. Bathurst (Kipling), 144-146
Mrs. Maxon Protests (Hope), 247-249
Mummer's Wife, The, (Moore), 377
 Murger, Henri, 153
- Nana* (Zola), 377
Nell Gwynn, Comedian, (Moore), 233
New Canterbury Tales, The, (Hewlett), 78
New Review, The, 17
 Nicoll, Dr. Robertson, 223
Nigger of the Narcissus, The, (Conrad), 13, 14, 19, 290
 Norris, Frank, 334, 335, 336, 337
Nostramo (Conrad), 21-24, 29
- Octopus, The*, (Norris), 336
Old Wives' Tale, The, (Bennett), 206, 213, 219, 222-226
 Ollivant, Alfred, 50, 94, 280-296
On the City Wall (Kipling), 142
Open Country (Hewlett), 88, 90-92
Orange Girl, The, (Basant), 233
Orchard Thief, The, (Dudeney), 297
 "Ouida," 154, 155, 282
Outcast of the Island, The, (Conrad), 11
- Pardon, Le*, (Margueritte), 400

- Pascarel* ("Ouida"), 154
Patrician, The, (Galsworthy), 183, 200, 202-203, 205
Pemberton, Max, 50, 215
Personal Record, A, (Conrad), 1, 11, 18
Phantom Rickshaw, The, (Kipling), 126
Phillpotts, Eden, 94-121, 326, 327
Phroso (Hope), 232
Pickwick Papers, The, (Dickens), 34
Pigs in Clover (Danby), 255, 376, 379, 383, 384, 386, 388-398, 404, 405, 414
Pinero, Arthur, 52
Pixy in Petticoats, A, (Trevena), 329, 330, 333
Plain Tales from the Hills, (Kipling), 130, 135, 181
Polite Farces (Bennett), 207
Portreeve, The, (Phillpotts), 110-112
Prince Otto (Stevenson), 233
Prisoner of Zenda, The, (Hope), 233, 236, 250
Puck o' Pook's Hill (Kipling), 141

Quatre Évangiles, Les, (Zola), 124
Queen's Quair, The, (Hewlett), 56, 59, 66, 71-78, 85, 92
Quisanté (Hope), 239-241, 250

Rachel Lorian (Dudeney), 297, 322
Redcoat Captain (Ollivant), 280, 285-289
Rescue of Pluffles, The, (Kipling), 124

Rest Harrow (Hewlett), 82, 88, 90-92, 93
Return, The, (Conrad), 20
Rewards and Fairies (Kipling), 54, 123
Richard Yea-and-Nay (Hewlett), 50, 55, 56, 66-71, 72, 92, 291
River, The, (Phillpotts), 94, 107-109
Road in Tuscany, The, (Hewlett), 58-60
Roberts, Morley, 232
Robin Brilliant (Dudeney), 297
Rod, Édouard, 259
Ruskin, John, 148, 170

Sapho (Daudet), 377
Saracinesca (Crawford), 368
Sebastian (see *Incomplete Etonian*), (Danby), 404-408
Secret Agent, The, (Conrad), 29
Secret Woman, The, (Phillpotts), 109-110, 113
Sense de la Vie, Le (Rod), 269
Septimus (Locke), 148, 150, 167-169, 170, 175
Serao, Matilde, 378
Servant of the Public, A, (Hope), 241-243, 250
Shakespeare, A Life of, (Lee), 20
Ship that Found Herself, The, (Kipling), 124-125
Shoulder-Knot, The, (Dudeney), 297
Simon Dale (Hope), 233
Simon the Jester (Locke), 148, 170-172
Sinclair, May, 208, 252-279
Skram, Amelia, 378
Slave, The, (Hichens), 343, 349, 355-357

- Smollett, Tobias, 120, 293
 Snaith, John Collis, 206, 325
Soldiers Three (Kipling), 123, 130
Somehow Good (De Morgan), 41-45
Sons of the Morning (Phillipotts), 104-107, 115
Spanish Jade, The, (Hewlett), 87-88
Sphinx's Lawyer, The, (Danby), 379, 398-400
Spindle and Plough (Dudene), 297, 299, 318-322
Spirit in Prison, A, (Hichens), 367-368
 Stevenson, Robert Louis, 290
 Stoker, Bram, 35
Stooping Lady, The, (Hewlett), 80, 85-87
Story of the Gadsbys, The, (Kipling), 141, 144, 234
 Strindberg, Gustav, 377
 Sudermann, Hermann, 376
Superseded (Sinclair), 254, 261-262
Tales of Unrest (Conrad), 20
Talisman, The, (Scott), 72
Taming of John Blunt (Ollivant), 280
Teresa of Watling Street, (Bennett), 216
Tertium Quid, The, (Kipling), 127
Tess of the D'Urbervilles, (Hardy), 42
 Thackeray, William Makepeace, 33, 40, 120
They (Kipling), 141
 Thompson - Seton, Ernest, 282
Three Brothers, The, (Phillipotts), 116
Three Weeks (Glyn), 374
 Tolstoy, Leo, 230, 293
To-morrow (Conrad), 24
Tongues of Conscience (Hichens), 353
Traffics and Discoveries (Kipling), 123, 130
 Trevena, John, 324-341
Trionfo della Morte, Il, (d'Annunzio), 377
Trois Mousquetaires, Les, (Dumas), 291
 Trollope, Anthony, 8, 35
 "Truce of the Bear, The," (Kipling), 123, 129, 133, 185
Truth About an Author, The, (Bennett), 207, 208
 Turgenev, Ivan, 4, 208
Typhoon (Conrad), 12, 21, 24, 29
Tyson's, The, (Sinclair), 252, 255
Under the Deodars (Kipling), 126
Under Two Flags ("Ouida"), 154
Under Western Eyes (Conrad), 29
 Valdés, Armando Palacio, 230
Vanity Fair (Thackeray), 13, 34, 188
Vie, Une, (Maupassant), 190
Vie de Bohème, La, (Murger), 154
Villa Rubein (Galsworthy), 179
Vintage, The, (Benson), 233
 Ward, Mrs. Humphry, 205
Ward, James and William, Life of, (Frankau), 382
 Waugh, Arthur, 344

- Westminster Review, The*, 178
Where Love Is (Locke), 155, 156, 157-159
Whirlwind, The, (Phillipotts), 94, 112-115
White Dove, A, (Locke), 169
 "White Man's Burden, The," 123
Wireless (Kipling), 141
Wise Woods, The, (Dudenev), 323
Without Benefit of Clergy (Kipling), 128, 137, 141
Woman (London), 207
Woman with a Fan, The, (Hichens), 357, 358-362
 Zola, Émile, 124, 181, 230, 293, 299, 348, 357, 376

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